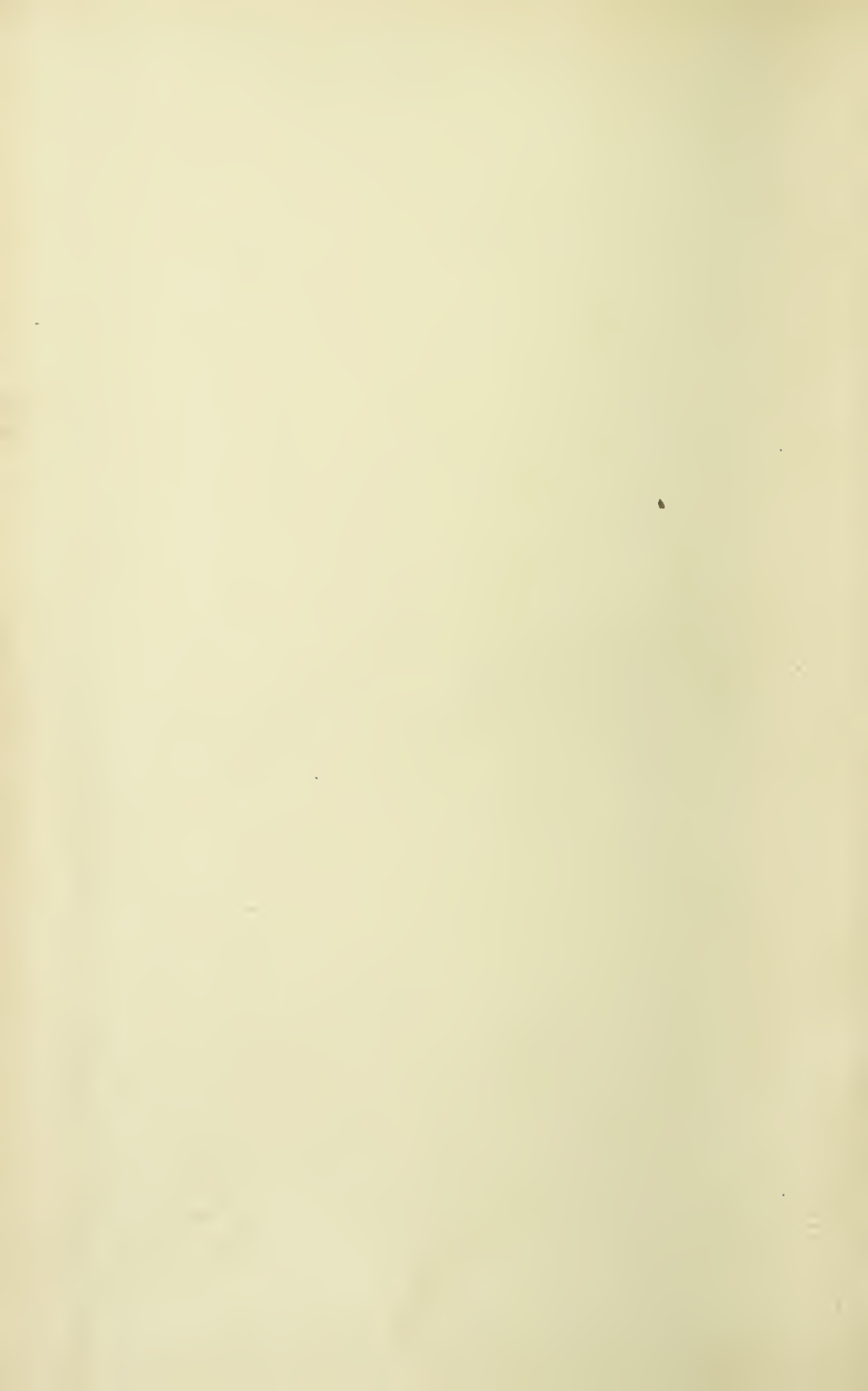


BITS FROM BLINKBONNY
OR
BELL O' THE MANSE
BY
JOHN STRATHESK





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1st (1) Can. Edition
includes

"Preface to the
Third Edition"

BITS FROM BLINKBONNY.





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THE ARTISTS BIT.

BITS FROM BLINKBONNY

OR

BELL O' THE MANSE

A TALE OF SCOTTISH VILLAGE LIFE BETWEEN

1841 AND 1851

BY

JOHN STRATHESK

With Six Original Illustrations

TORONTO

WILLIAM BRIGGS, 78 & 80 KING ST. EAST

C. W. COATES, MONTREAL, QUE.

S. F. HUESTIS, HALIFAX, N.S.

1885

ENTERED, according to the Act of the Parliament of Canada, in the year one thousand eight hundred and eighty-five, by WILLIAM BRIGGS, agent for John Tod, St. Leonard's, Scotland. In the Office of the Minister of Agriculture, at Ottawa.

PREFACE.

THESE "Bits from Blinkbonny" were grouped together by the Author to beguile the tedium of a protracted period of domestic quarantine. They are not only his first attempt at sustained literary work, but they were commenced without any concerted plan.

Blinkbonny was selected as a pretty name for a Scottish village, but the Author himself cannot fix the precise locality; and all the names he has used are supposititious, excepting those of such public characters as Dr. Duff, Dr. Guthrie, etc.

Owing to his having adopted the autobiographical form, the Author has experienced more difficulty in writing the preface than any other part of the book, as, although most of the incidents are founded on fact, a good deal of imported matter has been required to form a connected narrative. He also knows that in

bringing together the varieties of character and incident that an ordinary Scotch village affords, he has passed "from grave to gay, from lively to severe," in some instances with injudicious abruptness, and that there are other defects for which he needs to apologize; but as even his readers will probably differ as to where these occur, it is not desirable for him to dwell on them.

The Author is not in any way connected with the Free Church of Scotland, and at the outset he had no intention of treating so largely as he has done of the "Disruption" of 1843; if, however, he induces the rising generation to study the past and the present of that great movement, neither they nor he will regret the prominence given to it in this volume.

The illustrations with which the book is embellished are "composition" sketches; but the Author confidently leaves these to introduce themselves.

The idiom of the Scottish language—the dear old Doric—has been to the Author a difficult matter to render, so as to be at once intelligible to ordinary readers and fairly representative of the everyday mother tongue of the common people of Scotland. He hopes that he has succeeded in doing this, as well

as in preserving a few of the floating traditions of the passing generation which are so rapidly being swept away by the absorbing whirlpool of these bustling times, and that his readers will follow with kindly interest these homely records of the various subjects he has tried to portray in these "Bits from Blink-bonny."

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE author is delighted to find you so hurriedly called for, that he has only time to express the hope that you will receive as kindly a welcome as your precursor has done.

February 1882.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

THE author gladly avails himself of the opportunity *you* afford him, to express his gratification at the warm reception which Bell and her friends at Blinkbonny have met with on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as to make a few verbal corrections.

“The cleanest corn that e’er was dight
May ha’e some pyles o’ caff in.”

July 1882.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE MANSE.

	PAGE
The Artist and his Bits—Blinkbonny—The Author and his Relations—The Good Folks at Greenknowe—The Manse—Once thinking of getting married—The Interrupted Call—Mr. and Mrs. Barrie—Bell of the Manse—Wee Nellie—Her Illness, Death, and Grave—"A Butterfly on a Grave" (<i>Mrs. Sigourney</i>),	1

CHAPTER II.

A QUIET EVENING AT THE MANSE.

Bell's Sliding Scale—Her Pattens—The Hospitality of the Manse—Be judeecious—James and his Skates—Mrs. Barrie's Experiences—Mr. Barrie's Illness—The Good Samaritan—A Startling Proposal,	22
--	----

CHAPTER III.

THE MARRIAGE AND THE HOME-COMING.

"The Books"—P.P.C.—Marriage Presents—"The Confession of Faith"—Toasts—"The Frostit Corn"—"The Country Rockin'"—Auntie Mattie—"The Farmer's Ingle"—Peggy Ritchie on the Churchyard—A Lamb Leg and a Berry Tart—Mathieson's Heid,	41
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO SIDES OF THE CHURCH QUESTION.

PAGE

Coming Events—Bell and the Seed Potatoes—Her Idea of the Government—Knowe Park—Spunks—The Town-Clerk of Ephesus—Bell's summing up—Daisy—The Eve of Battle—Sir John M'Lelland's Opinions on the "Evangelicals"—Patronage—Preaching Competitions—Little Gab—Non-Intrusion and Voting,	58
---	----

CHAPTER V.

BLINKBONNY AND THE DISRUPTION.

Bell's Opinion of Knowe Park—Mr. Barrie's Return—The Deputation's Visit to the Manse—Mr. Barrie's Statement—Mr. Taylor's Views—George Brown on the Crisis—His Covenanting Relics,	85
---	----

CHAPTER VI.

THE DISRUPTION AND BLINKBONNY.

The Meeting in Beltane Hall—The End of the Ten Years' Conflict—George Brown's Exercises—The Bellman's Difficulty—Sabbath Services at the Annie Green—"Thae Cath'lics"—The Secession Church—Mr. Barrie's Successor—Bell and Smoking—"Hillend" on Doctors and Ministers—A Man amang Sheep,	99
--	----

CHAPTER VII.

OUT OF THE OLD HOME AND INTO THE NEW.

Leaving the Manse—Dr. Guthrie and the Children—Nellie's Tibby—Well settled—Bell's Experiment with the Hens—Dan Corbett—Braid Nebs—Babbie's Mill,	126
--	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

BLINKBONNY FREE CHURCH.

	PAGE
The Disruption of 1843—Hardships—Scotch Villages and Church Matters—The New Church—The Session and Deacons—The Beadle, Walter Dalglish—The Precentorship—Psalms and Hymns—Mr. Barrie's New Life—Foreign Missions—The Assembly's Decision—The Living Child—Saxpence—"Gude Siller gaun oot o' the Country"—Reminiscences of Dr. Duff,	154

CHAPTER IX.

BELL AT HOME IN KNOWE PARK.

The Three Ministers of Blinkbonny—Mr. Walker—The Ten Virgins—The finest o' the Wheat—Bell's Fee—Alloa Yarn—Bell's Cooking—Sheep's-head—Mr. Kirkwood and the Potato-Soup—Dan in the Kitchen—Mr. Gordon o' the Granaries and the Smugglers—Dan at Nellie's Grave—Mr. Barrie's Visit to Dan,	177
---	-----

CHAPTER X.

INCIDENTS IN BLINKBONNY.

Miss Park on Dan—The Sweep's dead—Mrs. Gray's Elegy on her Husband—The Coffin for naething—The New School-master—The Roast Beef in the Lobby—The Examination Committee—"Hoo' to get there"—George Brown's Death—Scripture References—Mrs. Barrie and Mr. Corbett—Dan and the Pictures—Dan's Bath—His Dream—Dan at Church—His Visit to Babbie's Mill—Colonel Gordon's First Visit—Sir John M'Lelland at the Soiree—"The Angel's Whisper" (<i>Samuel Lover</i>),	205
--	-----

CHAPTER XI.

CHANGES AT KNOWE PARK.

The Dorcas Society—The Morisonian Controversy—Colonel Gordon's Second Visit—A Real Scotch Dinner—Champagne	
--	--

	PAGE
—Dan an' the Duke o' Gordon—The Smuggler's Log-book—Colonel Gordon's Will—Dan's Bank—The Call to Edinburgh—No-Popery Agitation—David Tait o' Blackbrae—The Sow and the Corinthians—Bell woo'd—Mrs. Barrie breaks the Ice—Bell won—Found out and congratulated, .	230

CHAPTER XII.

ANOTHER MARRIAGE AND HOME-COMING.

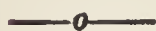
The Forms of Procedure—Reception of the News of Bell's Marriage by Mr. Taylor, and by Sir John M'Lelland—"Her Weight in Gold"—Bell's Presents—"Hook ma Back"—Mr. Walker's Violin—Bell's Marriage and Home-coming—The Infar Cake—Creeling—Dan, "Burke," and the Noisy Convoy—The Vexing Pig—The "Kirkin'," .	259
---	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

The Packing at Knowe Park—The Bachelor Umbrella—Nellie's Box—Dan and Rosie—Dan on Evangelical Effort—On "The Angel's Whisper"—Bell in Edinburgh—Home to Blackbrae—Andrew Taylor's Criticisms, . . .	284
---	-----

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

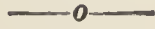


THE ARTIST'S BIT,	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Frontispiece.</i>
BLINKBONNY,	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Page 6</i>
BELL AND "DAISY,"	.	.	.	.	.	<i>„ 70</i>
BABBIE'S MILL,	.	.	.	.	.	<i>„ 152</i>
DUMBARTON CASTLE,	.	.	.	.	.	<i>„ 197</i>
BELL'S "HOOSE O' HER AIN"—BLACKBRAE,	.	.	.	.	.	<i>„ 250</i>



BITS FROM BLINKBONNY.

BITS FROM BLINKBONNY.



CHAPTER I.

THE MANSE AND ITS INMATES.

“But how the subject theme may gang,
Let time and chance determine ;
Perhaps it may turn out a sang,
Perhaps turn out a sermon.”—*Burns.*

AN eminent artist, a member of the Royal Scottish Academy, who, although well up in the seventies, and feeling many of the infirmities of advanced age, still continues to enrich the world by as charming landscapes and crisp sea-pieces as he produced in his younger days, was showing me some of his sketches from nature, many of them bearing traces of repeated handling. His face brightened up when a well-thumbed favourite was lighted on amongst the promiscuous contents of the old portfolio. With his eye fixed on the sketch, and his hand moving as if either the pencil or the brush were in it, he told with animation where he made this sketch or took that “bit.”

“Ah!” said he, “painting is a difficult, a very difficult thing; in fact, it’s just made up of ‘bits’—just bits. A something takes your eye,—a nook, a clump of trees, often a single tree, a boulder, or rocks (grand effects of light and shade on rocks)—ay, even the shape or tinge of a cloud. Well, to work you go, and down with it.—There,” said he, as he lifted what seemed a mere scrawl on a half-sheet of old note-paper, “I took that at the Bank door. I was struck with the effect of the sunlight on water falling over a barrel that a man was filling in the river, and thought it would make a nice picture. I got that bit of paper out of the Bank, took off my hat, laid the paper on it, sketched it off in—oh! less than five minutes, and put it on canvas next day. There’s another. I did that bit on the leaf of my fishing pocket-book at Makumrich, near old Gilston Castle. Now there,” said he, taking up a rough-looking, unfinished seascape in oil, “that has been a very useful bit. I was sketching North Berwick Harbour, when all at once I was struck with an effect of light and shade on the sea. I was able to hit it exactly;” and as he said this, he moved his head from side to side and scanned the picture, saying, “That bit has been of great use to me, although I have never made a finished picture of it. The ‘effect,’ the gleam, the tone are as nearly

perfect as possible. Ah," continued he, laying down the sketch, and turning to his easel, on which lay a snow scene,—an old thatched cottage, in my opinion quite finished,—“now there's lots of bits to work up in that picture.” And sometimes shaking his brush, and sometimes whirling it in a very small circle close to the picture, but never touching it, he said, “There—and there—and perhaps there. Ah! nobody would believe what a labour it is to make a good picture, with all the *bits* and *bits*!”

I am but an aspirant in literature, and would never presume to compare myself with the veteran artist, or think that I could ever arrange my bits of village gossip and incident with the artistic skill which has earned for him the order of merit that he has so honourably won and so worthily wears, but I confess to a desire to present some of the bits of the everyday social life of Blinkbonny in such a form as to give my readers an idea of its lights and shadows.

Blinkbonny is more of a village than a town, although it is generally spoken of by the outside world as a town, owing to its having its small weekly market and occasional fairs. It lies fully thirty miles inland from Edinburgh, and is the centre of a good agricultural district, with a background of moorland and hills. My father was a merchant in it,—a very general

merchant, as he dealt in grain, wool, seeds, groceries, cloth, hardware, and various other commodities. This may seem a strange mixture in these days of the division of labour and subdivision of trades, but such dealers were not uncommon fifty years ago, and they were frequently men of considerable capital and influence. My elder and only brother was a partner with my father in the business ; and as I had early expressed a desire to be a minister, I was sent to Edinburgh to prosecute my studies in that direction, and had completed my fourth session at college, when the death of my brother rendered it necessary that I should do all in my power to supply his place.

I had been but a few months at home, when my father, whose health had been failing for some years, became a confirmed invalid. My brother's death had not only affected his spirits, but injured his health, and within little more than a year after this heavy trial the old man was laid beside his wife and eldest son in the churchyard of Blinkbonny. My sisters, all of them older than myself, were married, excepting Maggie ; and about a year after my father's death Maggie became Mrs. M'Lauchlan, so that I was left a very young inmate of Bachelor Hall. When I had time to feel lonely I did so, but the demands of business kept me thoroughly employed ; and although I joined habitually

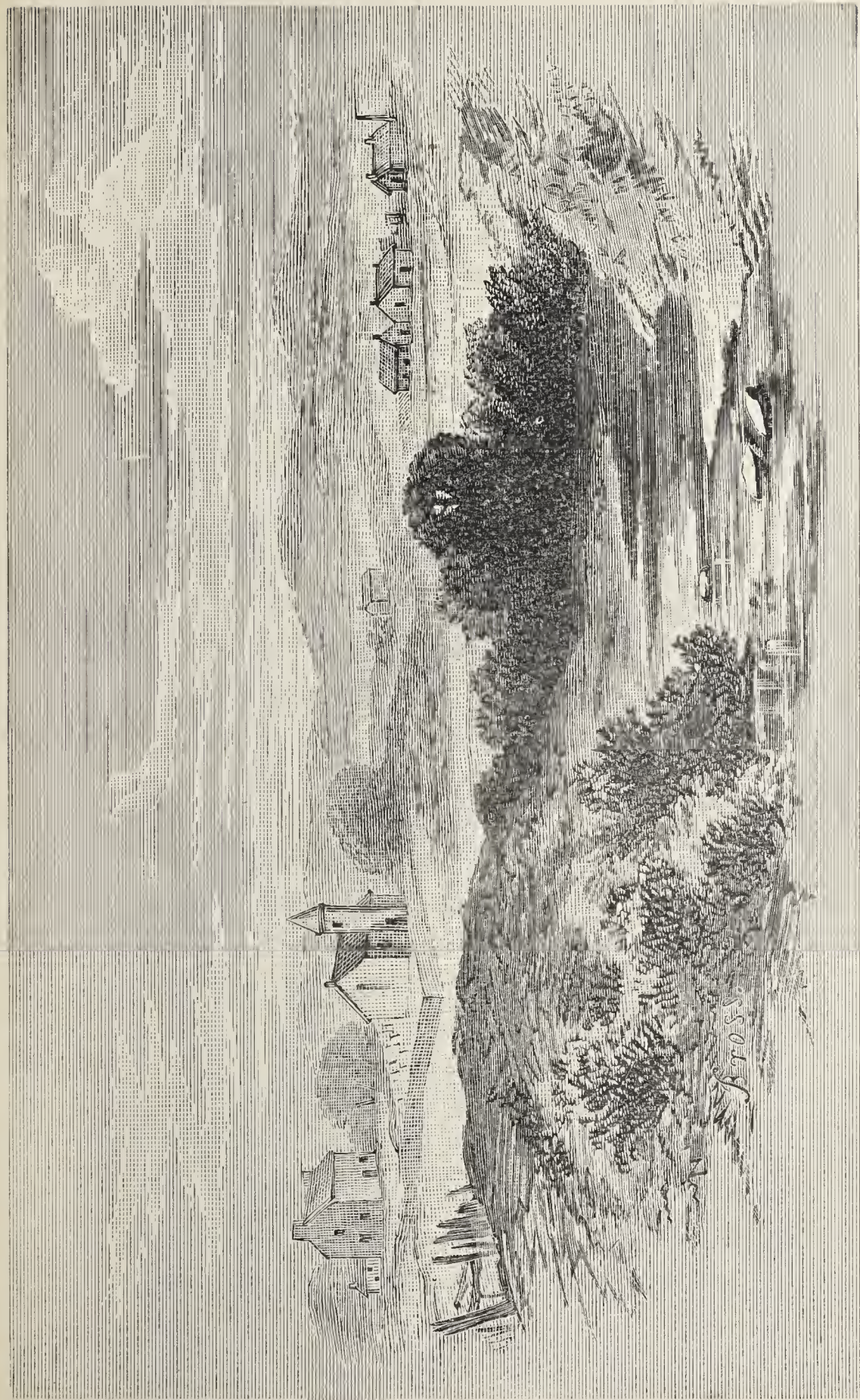
in the socialities of the neighbourhood, I did not seriously think of getting married until I was called on to act as bridegroom's man, to my schoolfellow and college companion, John M'Nab, now the Reverend John M'Nab. He married Mary Stewart of Greenknowe, the daughter of a small proprietor on the outskirts of our village. Her sister Agnes was bridesmaid, and we were necessarily brought a good deal into one another's society. I had often met her before, and liked her in a general way, but at her sister's marriage I came fully under the influence of her charms. There was something—well, something—I cannot describe it by any other word than just “something”—that fairly possessed me. For days afterwards she was in my head, in my dreams, in my heart. I will not describe our courtship; it was neither long nor romantic. I wooed and won her, got Mrs. Stewart's consent, and on New Year's Day 1841 we fixed that our marriage should take place in the last week of January.

Mrs. Stewart felt the cold weather severely, and could not venture to call at the manse to request Mr. Barrie, our worthy parish minister, to perform the ceremony. She asked Agnes to go in her stead, but Agnes could not muster courage to do so—she even felt too shy to write to Mr. Barrie; so, although it was not exactly according to the strict rules of etiquette

I promised to call on Mr. Barrie next day, and to arrange the matter with him.

The manse stood on the top of a piece of slightly rising ground, about a quarter of a mile to the south-west of the village. The situation was a pleasant one. It commanded on three sides extensive views of a well-cultivated country, backed by high and picturesque hills; the village bounded the view on the north-east. Near the manse stood the neat church, surrounded by the churchyard. There were also a park of about four acres, a garden covering nearly an acre, and some outhouses, the whole enclosed by a compact wall.

I had been on intimate terms with all the inmates of the manse, from Bell, the only and worthy servant, upwards; but my errand made me feel rather confused, and instead of the usual offhand remark to Bell, varying from, "Weel, Bell, hoo's a' wi' ye?" to comments on the weather or crops, as suited the season, I bluntly asked if Mr. Barrie was engaged. There was a flavour of tartness in Bell's manner as she replied, "Mr. Barrie's aye thrang, but he's aye ready to see onybody that wants him partic'larly. I'll speir at *him* if he's engaged," and she disappeared. Mr. Barrie himself came to the door, shook hands with me with more than usual heartiness, put a special emphasis on the



BLINKBONNY. (Page 6).

happy in wishing me "a happy New Year," gave my hand a sort of squeeze, took a long look at me, and with a smirk on his face said, "Come in, Mr. Martin, come in." He had not called me "Mr." before, but only plain Robert; and from the blithe way in which he showed me into the "study," I saw that he knew my position, if not my errand.

Our conversation was at first general, and on my side jerky. I did not follow up intelligently the subjects he introduced, but was either silent or rambling on quite irrelevant topics. He made a long pause, doubtless to induce me to lead, as he evidently saw I was not able to follow. The not uncommon weakness of Scotchmen, of trying to conceal strong emotions even on subjects on which they feel very keenly, was working in me. I was heart-glad at the prospect of my marriage, and well I might; but I wished to appear very cool, so, as if merely beginning another subject, I said in a conversational way, "I was once thinking of getting married." Scarcely had I finished the sentence, when Bell announced that Sir John M'Lelland would like to speak to Mr. Barrie when he was disengaged. Knowing that Sir John was the largest landowner in the parish, and the patron of the church, and that he was taking an active part in a church extension scheme in which Mr. Barrie was

deeply interested, I at once left the "study," stating that I would call to-morrow night, and made for Greenknowe, where I was bantered by both ladies, but especially by Mrs. Stewart, when I told about "once thinking of getting married."

Laying the emphasis first on the *once*, then on the *thinking*, then on both, she said, "Is that all the length you are? You should think *twice*—second thoughts are often best. Agnes, if you had either called or written as I wished, we could have had the invitations out to-day; but perhaps Robert will take the second thought to-night, and until *he* quite makes up his mind we must wait with patience."

Next night found me at the manse door, which Bell "answered." I was very frank, but Bell had barely digested last night's slight, and before I had finished my salutation to her she said dryly, "It'll be the minister ye want the nicht again?" and showed me into the study. Mr. Barrie, after expressing regret at the sudden breaking up of our last night's interview, asked me if the day had been fixed. I told him that we would prefer the last Tuesday of January, if that date suited him. He at once said, "I'll make it suit me;" and after noting it in a memorandum book, he proceeded, although I had not mentioned the name of my future wife, to speak very nicely of the good folks at

Greenknowe; of the late Mr. Stewart, who had been one of his elders, and from whom, in the earlier years of his ministry, he had received much useful counsel; of Mrs. Stewart's almost motherly kindness ever since he came to the parish; of his great esteem for Miss Stewart (my Agnes), and of her devotion to her father, especially in his long and last illness. He also spoke of my late father and brother as excellent, very excellent men, said some things about myself which I will not repeat, and taking me by the hand, said, "Humanly speaking, your marriage promises to be in every respect a happy event for all concerned. May God bless you both, and make you blessings to one another, to all your circle, to the Church, and to the world."

I thanked him warmly, and added that I might trouble him by asking his advice on some matters, and possibly Mrs. Barrie's; and was proceeding to bid him good-night, when he said, "Robert, this is an occasion, I may say a great occasion, and you must take an egg with us. I told Mrs. Barrie last night that you were 'once thinking of getting married.' She will be delighted to learn that your second thought has got the length of fixing the day. And, whilst I am in the habit of giving all young bridegrooms a few quiet hints, I would like you to have a chat with

both of us. You will find Mrs. Barrie's counsel sound and practical, so we'll join her in the parlour;" and suiting the action to the word, he lifted the lamp, and asking me to follow him, made for the snug parlour, where he announced me as "a subject of *compound* interest now, not simple as before."

Mrs. Barrie was carefully darning a stocking, which she laid on the table as I entered, and shaking my hand with great heartiness, she said, "I need hardly wish *you* a happy new year, Mr. Martin. You are as sure to be happy as anybody can be sure of happiness in this world. I hope you consider yourself a *very* lucky man?"

I made as nice a reply as I could. Mrs. Barrie repeated her husband's "You must take an egg with us;" and laying the half-darned stocking into her work-basket on the back table, she looked into a cradle that stood in the cosiest corner of the room, and seeing that all was right there, she said, "I must see that the other little folks are *happit* before I sit down," and left the room. But before I tell of the evening's quiet enjoyment in the manse parlour, I will say something about the inmates of the manse itself.

Mr. Barrie was ordained as minister of Blinkbonny in 1830, and early in 1831 he brought his young wife, till then Mary Gordon, home to the manse. He was a son of the manse, a son of the minimum

stipend; when half through his preparatory studies he became a son of the Widows' Fund. Mrs. Barrie's parents had been in a very comfortable worldly position for the first sixteen years of her life, but through circumstances over which they had no control, and to which she never referred, their means had been greatly reduced. Her father died when she was eighteen years of age; her mother survived her father about four years. She was thus an orphan at twenty-two. She was twenty-five years of age when she was married, Mr. Barrie being her senior by fully one year; and whilst she brought to the manse "a good providing," she brought little money or "tocher," as a bride's marriage portion is called in Scotland. The income of the minister of Blinkbonny, or, to use the church phrase, the "stipend," was paid partly in money and partly in grain, and averaged about £160 yearly. The furnishing of the manse and the minister's library had required and received careful consideration. Even the providing of live stock for the park, to commence with, involved an outlay that in the circumstances was considerable; but by Bell's indefatigable industry and management, the cow, the hens, the garden, and even the pig became such important sources of supply in the household economy, that any description of the

inmates of the manse would be utterly incomplete which did not make honourable mention of worthy Bell.

Bell had come with Mrs. Barrie as her first servant, and had grown up as, if not into, a part of the family. She was fully the middle height, muscular, not stout but well-conditioned, had a good complexion, a "weel-faured" face, keen, deep-set, dark eyes; and altogether she was a comely woman. I believe her full name was Isabella Cameron, but she was only known as Bell, occasionally Mr. Barrie's Bell; so much so that when a letter came to the manse, addressed "Miss Cameron," both Mr. and Mrs. Barrie had laid it aside, expecting that some stranger would call for it, and were instructing Bell to return it to the post office in the evening, should no Miss Cameron cast up, when Bell said, "My name's Cameron; it'll maybe be for me." It was, much to Mrs. Barrie's embarrassment, and told of the death of Bell's aunt. Bell had few relations,—none that seemed to care for her, and consequently none that she kept up intimacy with.

She was a year older than Mrs. Barrie. Her first "place" had been in a small farmhouse, where the manners were very primitive, and the work was very constant. One of her questions shortly after coming to the manse was, "Does Mr. Barrie aye take his dinner with his coat on?" a thing she had not

seen before. Mrs. Barrie had a little difficulty in getting her to understand the *proprieties*, but none in getting her to do exactly as she was told. - Bell felt nothing a bother, took pleasantly any explanation given as to her mistakes, laughed at them when pointed out; and with a cheerful "I'll mind that," thanked Mrs. Barrie. It took her some time to learn the distinctive tones of the bells, the parlour, dining-room, front door, etc.; and for the first week or two, when a bell was rung, she ran to the nearest room and tried it, then to another, sometimes to the disturbance of the folks inside; but she soon came to know them.

It was a sight to see Bell unbuckle her gown,—which when at work she gathered round her, and fastened in some wonderfully *fast-loose* way,—shake herself, and stalk off in response, especially to the front door, to any ring that seemed peremptory.

Sir John M'Lelland was making his first call after the marriage. He handed Bell his card, politely asking at the same time if Mr. and Mrs. Barrie were at home. Bell looked at the card, but it was in German text, and therefore unintelligible. She looked at Sir John, but that did not help her; she then turned on her heel,—the swiftest, cleverest motion of the kind that could be imagined,—walked briskly to Mrs. Barrie, and said, "There's a man at

the door, a weel-put-on man, and he asked for you; an' he gied me a ticket, an' he's there yet."

Mrs. Barrie soon put such mistakes right. She found Bell an apt scholar, scrupulously clean, sterlingly honest, and always busy, though not fussy. At first Bell was most at home among the hens, cows, pigs, and in the garden, but she soon became well up in all household work. Even the addition of the children one by one never seemed to tax Bell's powers heavily. The first two, James and Mary, were healthy, and in Bell's homely phrase, "never looked behind them;" but the third, "Wee Nellie," had been from her birth "a feeble, delicate little thing." When she was about three years old, scarlet fever attacked the children, beginning with Lewis, the baby. His was a mild case; so were those of James and Mary, but Nellie's was a severe one. Her pulse ran very high, her little body was covered with the bright scarlet "*rash*," her throat sorely affected, her breathing laboured and requiring more effort than the weak constitution could spare. Mrs. Barrie and Bell were unwearied in their efforts to relieve the poor sufferer, and gently was she passed from knee to knee in her restless moods, gently was she laid down again, and coaxed and humoured and waited on with unspeakably tender care.

Between Bell and Nellie there had been a special intimacy. She had called herself "Bell's bairn;" and as her age and health did not admit of her joining the other children at play, she was seldom out of the kitchen, except when Bell wrapped her cosily in a plaid, and carried her about the parks or garden, where Bell diverted herself quite as much as the "wee whitefaced girlie," by humouring her childish whims, and joining in, if not provoking, her wondering interest. And ever and anon, as Nellie expressed delight at what Bell said, or did, or pulled, or showed, Bell would press her warmly to her breast, and croon over words of endearment about her "wee croodlin' doo," "her ain darling Nellie," "she was Bell's bairn," and tell her that when she was big she would help Bell to milk "Daisy," and feed the hens. The cosiest corner in the kitchen was Nellie's "housie." There she would play for hours, sometimes sitting on her little stool, and chatting with Bell "like an auld body;" sometimes fondling her black-and-white kitten Tibby; sometimes putting to sleep her favourite doll "Black Tam," who, although he had neither arms nor legs, and his trunk had by long wear lost the black paint, and appeared as bare timber well time-soiled, still retained on his head, which had been gouged out to imitate the woolly hair of the negro,

crescent-shaped indents of his original blackness, and his lips were flecked with streaks of their primitive crimson; sometimes playing with broken bits of china, drawing Bell's attention to those with gold on them as "Nellie's pennies." And not infrequently did Bell take the wee lassie into her kindly lap, and press her to her kindly bosom, and sing, and sigh as she sung, her favourite if not only song of the "Bonnie, bonnie banks of Benlomond."

It need hardly be recorded that Bell's agony at Nellie's illness was only equalled by that of Mrs. Barrie,—possibly by that of Mr. Barrie, but only possibly. She had been struck with the hectic flush which glowed on Nellie's face, and saw that the fever was sore on her; but she hoped against hope, until on the seventh day of the illness a spasmodic movement of the weak body, and a hazy gleam of the weary eye, revealed to Bell that Nellie's recovery was hopeless. The thought of losing her came so suddenly on Bell, that she nearly broke down in the room; but restraining herself as her eye rested on Mrs. Barrie's calm motherly face, intent on anticipating and ministering to the wants of the sufferer, Bell whispered that she would "see if the bairns were all right, and be back immediately," and left the room. She walked noiselessly through the lobby,

at the darkest corner of it gave two or three great “gulps,” and uttered a bitter “Oh! dear, dear.” This was what nature demanded; this at least, more if she could have got it; but this little snatch relieved her pent-up heart, and braced her for further service. After seeing that the other children were right, she glided into the sick-room, from which Mr. Barrie, with a remark or rather a sigh about “too many breaths,” emerged as she entered. She took the fever-tossed child gently out of Mrs. Barrie’s wearied arms, and did her best to relieve the difficulty of breathing, so harassing to the watchers, and so sore on the patient. Gradually the fitful struggles became less violent; Nellie got quieter, softer, powerless. She half opened her eyes, then closed them slowly, and said in a faint voice, with a long *eerie* tone, “Bell.” Bell, half choking with grief, bent over her and kept saying, “Yes, ye’re Bell’s bairn, ye’re Bell’s ain bairn;” but observing her weary, weary face and increasing softness, she looked wistfully at the invalid, then sympathizingly at Mrs. Barrie, and, rising softly, laid the wee lamb on Mrs. Barrie’s lap, slipped noiselessly to Mr. Barrie’s study, and opening the door very slightly, said, “Please, sir, come ben, or the angels will be before you!” She got another gulp as she waited to follow him into the sick-room, and that helped her

greatly. The little darling recognised "papa,"—smiled as she lisped his name,—smiled if possible more sweetly as she heard her mother's voice, in quivering accents, saying, "My ain wee wee Nellie!" and sighed audibly, "Mamma's wee-wee,"—she then closed her eyes, and in the act of raising her tiny hand to her throat, it fell powerless, and Wee Nellie was Wee Nellie no more, or rather, as Bell said, Wee Nellie for ever.

Her delicate health and consequent helplessness, as also her gentleness, had endeared her to Mr. Barrie. When all was over, he muttered, "She was a pleasant child, lovely and beautiful in her life;" and added in a firmer voice, "It is well with the child, it is well." Bell lifted the little body from its mother's lap, and laid it gently on the bed. Her tears were streaming, but she had got the first bitter pang over, and putting her arm on, or rather round, Mrs. Barrie's shoulder, she said, "Come away, mem, for a little; I'll put all right." Mrs. Barrie obeyed mechanically, and was persuaded by Bell to lie down in bed. There wearied nature asserted her prerogative, and she slept soundly for a considerable time. When she returned to the sick-room, all traces of illness, in the shape of couches, baths, phials, and confusion, were away; the old crumb-cloth which had been put down to preserve the carpet was exchanged for a clean linen drugget; the fire was

out, the fire-place filled with fir-tops; the window was open, and the blind drawn down; here and there about the room were little muslin bags filled with lavender-seed; and on the mantelpiece, which, when she left, was covered with tumblers and cans and glasses of medical stuff, overlapped with paper, or having spoons in them to the hazard of their balance, stood three tumblers filled with bunches of lavender; and on the bed lay all that remained of Nellie, "dressed and laid out," her little body making all the more appearance that the snow-white bedcover was tightly laid over it. On her face lay a muslin handkerchief, kept down by a bag of lavender on either side.

As Mrs. Barrie approached the bed, Bell walked to the other side of it, and slowly folded down the face-cloth. All traces of suffering and weariness had vanished; the face was that of a child smiling in sleep.

"Bell," said Mrs. Barrie, "she's beautiful" (she had never said that before of her or of any of her children), "beautiful,—and she's home. Of such is the kingdom of Heaven." Bell tried to speak. She got the length of faltering out, "For ever with the Lord," when Mrs. Barrie stooped down to kiss her "lost lamb." Bell rather quickly folded the face-cloth over the mouth, saying, "On the cheek or the broo, mem, no' on the mooth." Although Mrs. Barrie's frame shook as her

lips touched the cold brow, she pressed them on it lingeringly, and as she raised herself she said, "I will go to her, she cannot return to me." Then, looking round the room, she said, "Bell, O Bell! I can never repay, and I will *never* forget, your kindness at this time." She would have said more, but Bell broke down, and Mrs. Barrie broke down, and both were considerably better when the pent-up flood of sorrow found relief.

In the churchyard of Blinkbonny stands a little marble slab, only a few inches above the ground bearing the following inscription:—

HELEN BARRIE

DIED 18TH MAY 1838, AGED 3 YEARS.

WITH CHRIST . . . FAR BETTER.

The spot had no more constant visitor than Bell. The flowers that in their seasons grew round it were planted by her hand, and tended by her with constant care; the only difference being that in weeding or trimming *it* there was not the quick, bustling energy which she exercised in the garden, but a reverent slowness unusual for her. She never put her foot on the sod under which Nellie lay; and although for the

first few visits she sighed mournfully as she read the inscription (and she read it aloud to herself at every visit), it was not long before her face lightened as she uttered the last two words, and she would add in a cheerful confirmatory tone, as if Nellie herself had repeated the epitaph, "Yes, Nellie; yes, Bell's bairn, far better; far, far better."

"A butterfly bask'd on a baby's grave,
Where a lily had chanced to grow;
'Why art thou here with thy gaudy dye,
When she of the blue and sparkling eye
Must sleep in the churchyard low?'

Then it lightly soar'd through the sunny air,
And spoke from its shining track:
'I was a worm till I won my wings,
And she whom thou mourn'st, like a seraph sings;
Wouldst thou call the blessed one back?'

Mrs. Sigourney.

CHAPTER II.

A QUIET EVENING AT THE MANSE.

“Thrift made them easy for the coming day,
Religion took the fear of death away ;
A cheerful spirit still ensured content,
And love smiled round them wheresoe’er they went.”

Crabbe.

I NEED hardly tell that between Mrs. Barrie and Bell the relationship of mistress and servant was more than cordial, more than intimate,—I can find no better word to express it than perfect. To say that Bell knew her place is a term much too bald ; she filled it, fulfilled it, *full-filled* it. She was devoted to the family’s interest ; her heart and mind were in her work ; she had a clear head, a strong arm, a blithe happy manner, and an uncommonly large stock of common sense.

She had a ready “knack” of dividing the articles under her care, by a *sliding* scale of her own, so as to put all to the best use : she laid aside some for the dining-room on “company” days, and even at a sudden call she was seldom found unprepared ; some

for the parlour, to suit old and young (for there was no formal nursery in the manse,—Bell's room, "off" the kitchen, was best entitled to the name, although competing claims might have been put forward by the kitchen itself, the parlour, and even the study); some for the kitchen, but *that* had not a high place in her scale; a good deal for the poor,—plain, handy, and given in good time and with discernment. Of one thing she was very careful, and that was, that if any food seemed likely to spoil, it was given away *before* it went wrong; if any clothing, it was given clean, and although often well patched, it was fit for immediate use. There was a corner in the kitchen pantry with a stock of comforts, and even luxuries, for cases of sickness, old age, or special need. The dumb animals were studied with thoughtful care, and they repaid it well. Everything that could be used was used regularly and methodically.

Bell's dress varied with her work. In the morning she "sorted" the live stock, clad in what an artist would have called a grotesque or picturesque costume, according to the season. In winter her upper garment was an old overcoat of Mr. Barrie's—a "Spencer;" in summer it was a loose-fitting jacket of striped cotton, lilac and white; her linsey-woolsey petticoat was of the right length for such work, and

all were shaken or brushed or beaten daily. She put on her cotton "morning wrapper," of blue with small white spots, just before she "set" the breakfast, and got "redd up" for the day in time to serve up the dinner. While she had her set times for her regular work, and "turned her hand" smartly to anything more pressing, she observed no "Factory Act" restrictions as to her hours of labour. Very early in the morning the clank of Bell's "pattens"¹ was heard as she attended to her home farm, and till far on in the evening she was working away anxiously and cheerfully. Her rest was a change of work on week-days. On the Sabbath afternoon she took what seemed likeliest a rest, viz. a walk round the whole premises, leisurely, observant, inquisitive, noticing everything, and mentally noting a good deal for next week's attention; varied

¹ Pattens were a primitive form of what are now known as overshoes, although "undershoe" defines the patten more correctly. The upper part was made of wood, like the frame of an ice-skate, but broader,—not unlike the frame of an oval horse-brush; and it was put on by pushing the foot firmly into overstraps made of leather or "girth cloth," in the same way as a horse-brush is fixed on a groom's hand. The under part was an oval-shaped ring of thin iron, measuring about six inches long, four inches broad, and one inch deep. There being no fastening at the back, the heel of the wearer's shoe made a "slipshod" noise on the wooden sole, which, added to the clanking of the iron soles, especially on any pavement or causeway, produced a double-beat "clatterin' clatter." To the inexperienced they were as difficult to walk with as skates are; they kept the foot about two inches from the ground, and were taken off before entering the house by merely withdrawing the foot. They not only kept the feet dry, but a "clean hoose."

by an occasional "saunter" into the gardens of the neighbours for purposes of observation, comparison, insight, or exchange.

Her respect for Mr. and Mrs. Barrie was profound: they were the handsomest couple in the parish, and many parishes might have been gone over before a more comely, gentle, ladylike, person than Mrs. Barrie could be met with. Bell said, "They were, if that was possible, better than they were bonnie;" and when Mrs. Barrie told Bell, as she often did, to rest and take things more leisurely, Bell would say, "I like to work, mem, I like it; I canna be idle." Mrs. Barrie's remonstrances were firmer on extra occasions, such as a "heavy washing," but Bell's answer was, "It was naething, naething at a'; and didna we get a grand day for drying the claes?"—or at the "Spring cleanin'," when her answer was, "It's best to get all the confusion past and by wi't. It was a nice thing a fresh, clean hoose;—'deed, mem, it astonishes me to see hoo much cleanin' every place needs, although it's no very bad like before you begin."

I may be dwelling too long on Bell, and it is not at all unlikely that she may become the heroine of my story, or rather the central figure round which the "bits" are grouped. If so, I could not wish a better, although Bell herself had no idea that she was such a

good servant, or that she did more than her bare duty; she oftener felt she had not done as well as she wished. She was far too sensible and busy a woman to think much about herself; and should she read this, she would be the first to say "she wished she had done better,—he hasna tell'd my fau'ts." Worthy, kindly, honest Bell!

Mrs. Barrie's housekeeping was the admiration, to many, it was the miracle, of the parish and district. She was a good manager, and with such a helpmate as Bell, she made her income do wonders. To the poor, the manse was always open for judicious help; the hospitality of the dining-room and parlour was substantial and becoming. This was all the more astonishing from the fact that Mrs. Barrie was "such a delightful creature," "such a charming person," "quite a lady," "a model minister's wife," "so accomplished," "so amiable," "so frank," "so nice," "so attractive" (these are actual epithets used by her friends), that the number of visitors, many of whom were easily persuaded to become guests, was larger than was desirable, and the consequent calls on the larder and pantry were heavy. Indeed, this was a subject of frequent remark among those who enjoyed the hospitality of the manse, all wondering how *ever* she could manage, and many "beseeching" Mrs. Barrie not to trouble herself about *them*, as they only wished a

quiet chat, although the length of many of their visits made them more like visitations ; Mrs. A. and Mrs. B. suggesting that Mrs. C. and Mrs. D. might be more considerate, whilst Mrs. C. and Mrs. D. were surprised at the audacious manner in which Mrs. A. and Mrs. B. thrust themselves on Mr. and Mrs. Barrie. It was really difficult to withstand the attractions of the manse, and Mr. and Mrs. Barrie, more particularly Mrs Barrie, was made a social martyr because she was so good, and kind, and true.

It never occurred to Mrs. Barrie that her good nature and good housekeeping were inconsiderately drawn upon by many who should have known better. She liked to see, and to contribute to, the enjoyment of others, preferred being active to being passive in this matter, and was "given to hospitality" from the genuine sweetness of her nature ; and while the sigh of weariness often escaped her lips at the close of some of the nice "sociables," which had been prolonged so as to interfere with domestic and other duties, she never murmured ; although she and Bell had often to encroach on the hours of rest or sleep in order to keep everything forward, and as they would like it.

Mr. Barrie's broadcloth was invariably fresh-looking, and his linen faultless. Mrs. Barrie was at all times becomingly dressed, and in the afternoons quite

"the lady, aye sae genty." The boys and girls were comfortably and neatly clad every day, specially so on Sabbath days, and theirs was a happy home.

Before I began to describe the inmates of the manse, I mentioned that Mrs. Barrie said, on leaving the parlour, she was going to see if the "bairns were happit." She seldom spoke Scotch, but when she did, it was with quaint emphasis and special sweetness. There was no real need for Mrs. Barrie having any anxiety on this subject of "happing," as Bell was always on the alert; but Mrs. Barrie's motherly heart could not rest until she had seen, and kissed in their beds, her "wee croodlin' doos." She went first to see Bell about the supper; then to Bell's room, where Mary and Flora were fast asleep; then to her own room, where Lewis was sleeping soundly, but James wide awake, scheming in his little head whether he could not make a pair of skates, and wishing that Bell would come up, as her "pattens" seemed the likeliest raw material to make them of, and he had seen an old pair in the byre. Mrs. Barrie heard his story, and said they would never do; but that Mr. Martin was in the parlour, and she would ask him the price of a pair, if he would sleep like a good boy; and kissing both, and "tucking" them in, she returned to the parlour.

During her absence, Mr. Barrie spoke to me in

quite a fatherly way. He knew that I had a good business and fair prospects, but that, since my father's death, I had bought a small property called Knowe Park adjoining the village, and that this had absorbed my available means to such an extent as to render it a little difficult for me to carry on business comfortably to the extent that my father had done. After stating that he thought I was taking a wise step in getting married, he said he found it generally the case, although it sounded like a contradiction, that a married house was more cheaply and much better kept than a bachelor's; and that he was in the custom of drawing the attention of folks who were about to get married to the subject of Life Assurance, or, if working men, to Benefit Societies, and to the necessity of economy and prudence in money matters. "But," added he, "you know these things better than I do, and I know you will act judeeciously," with a considerable emphasis on the *ee*. And as he referred to the various relationships of social life, he closed each section (for his advices unconsciously ran into "heads and particulars," like his sermons), with, in short, "Be judeecious;" and so clearly did he illustrate the inseparable connection between wisdom and success or happiness in everything he spoke of, that his advice seemed then, and seems yet, summed up in, "Be judeecious." He will

excuse me for telling here, that in the parish he was not unfrequently spoken of as "Judeecious;" and after the lapse of fully forty years, he is still occasionally styled, "Worthy old Judeecious," by some elderly warm friends, when recalling the sunny memories of former days, although in general conversation he is now spoken of as Dr. Barrie.

He related with considerable glee a saying of an old minister, who, in speaking of money matters, used to maintain that there were only three ways in which a minister could make money—patrimony, matrimony, or parsimony. He also told the story, which is long ago threadbare, of the old merchant, who, when asked why his son had not done so well in business as he had, replied, "That's easily explained: we old folks began with a little house and a plain table, with porridge and a herring, and got up to tea and a 'chuckie' (chicken); but the young folks began with a braw house, and tea and chuckies and silks, and never buckled up their sleeves to work." When Mrs. Barrie joined us, supper was already on the table. After glancing into the cradle, to see if all was right with "Gordie," or Gordon Lennox, as his full name was, she said, "Come away, gentlemen," and seating herself at the head of the table, did the honours in a graceful and homely way.

Bell had brought in the little black kettle, and it kept singing by the fireside. When the simple meal was over, Mr. Barrie and I made a "tumbler" of toddy each, a rare thing for him, but he said it was "New Year time," and an "occasion ;" and my health was drunk, and that of Agnes, in which Mrs. Barrie joined, a *very* rare thing for her ; and Mr. Barrie had just said, "Now, my dear, you must give Mr. Martin the benefit of a little of your experience," when the door-handle was slowly turned, evidently by a less firm hand than Bell's, and a little head and part of a little white nightgown, appeared at the half-opened door, and a voice was heard timidly saying, "Mamma," followed by Bell's voice, which, with a mixture of astonishment and anxiety in its tone, was heard saying, "James—here—at this time o' night! whatever's the matter wi' ye, laddie?" All in the room said, "James!" but before Mrs. Barrie had time to apologize, which she was proceeding to do to James for forgetting the skates, although the strict bargain was that she would speak to me if he *slept* like a good boy, he threw light on the interruption, greatly to Bell's relief, by saying, "Mamma, have you spoken to Mr. Martin about the skates?"

James' single sentence told the whole story better than any other words could have done it, and

I told him to come to see me to-morrow, and I would find him a pair. Mr. Barrie's "Oh, Mr. Martin, you—" and Mrs. Barrie's "My dear boy, you must—" and Bell's "Skates! you'll break your legs, or drown—" were all interrupted, and all three silenced by James's very pronounced "Oh, thank you, Mr. Martin, thank you very much;" and "Good night, James," had come from all round the supper table, and Bell had got him in hand to lead him away, and the door was all but closed, when it opened again. There seemed a struggle going on between James and Bell before he reappeared, this time at full length, with his one arm distended towards the lobby, his feet planted and his body inclined forwards, as if in resistance to an outward pull, and his other arm clenching firmly the upper bead of the dado of the parlour.

"Oh, Mr. Martin, please, sir, when will I come to-morrow?" said the boy eagerly.

"Nine o'clock, James," said I, "or any time after that."

"Oh, thank you, sir," said he; and looking at Mrs. Barrie, said, "May I go, mamma?"

"We'll see to-morrow," replied Mrs. Barrie; "do go to bed like a good boy."

This was too indefinite for James. "But please, mamma, may I go?" pleaded the boy with difficulty, for Bell was pulling him strongly outwards.

"Yes," came from Mr. Barrie, fettered by some conditions about not going on the "Loch" without getting mamma's permission, which James did not hear. Bell's strength had mastered his, and the door was closed. They went up-stairs, Bell enlarging on broken legs and drowning, James on trying to learn on the "pattens;" and Bell had to threaten to go down to me, and tell me not to give him them, and had actually feigned a determined start on that errand, when James said, "Oh, don't, Bell; I'll be a good boy, and sleep," which he did.

James being thus pleasantly disposed of, Mrs. Barrie began her record of experiences, which proved so interesting, that before she had gone on long, I so far forgot myself as to say, "Oh! how I wish Agnes had been here!" Mrs. Barrie caught me at once, and said with a merry smile, "Can you not do with us for an hour? or rather, why did you not bring her with you?"—then went on in a homely way with her useful hints and good advice, illustrating these by incidents that had occurred in her household.

A "for instance," or "I remember on one occasion," was followed by an account of a sudden call on her larder,—or a valuable dress torn, or soiled, or spoiled,—or a breakage,—or an unexpectedly heavy tradesman's account,—or something that was much needed,

and apparently beyond her power and purse, yet eventually procured by her ingenuity and patience,—or her little plans to make Mr. Barrie's coat into a suit for James and possibly a vest for Lewie. And as her family increased, her scheming, and shaping, and sewing, and turning of garments to keep them "cosy," were prettily told, and, if I may use such a term, romantic in their very simplicity. I cannot forget the pathos with which she told of a serious and alarming illness caught by Mr. Barrie the week after Nellie's death, at a funeral in a distant part of the parish, but doubtless aggravated by the disturbed state of his mind and the disorganized state of his frame. For, good man as he was, and perfectly resigned to God's will, he felt keenly the blank in the home,—for "a little chair was empty there;" and although I could not say he murmured, I know that he greatly missed "the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still" (*Tennyson*).

"He was very ill," said she; "alarmingly ill,—so ill that I suggested to Dr. Stevenson, or rather it struck the doctor and myself at the same moment, that it would be desirable to call in an Edinburgh consulting physician. I confess that the fee was a serious consideration, as I knew that it would prevent my getting the new wincey dresses for myself and the

girls that I was saving up for; although this only floated through my mind in its excited state, and required no effort to cast off. The professor came, and went into the case minutely. Never can I forget the kindly way in which he said that our family doctor had treated the case exactly as he himself would have done,—that Mr. Barrie was a splendid patient, self-possessed, scrupulously obedient to the doctor's orders, a model of passive subjection to the minutiae of medical requirements; and that his good constitution, which had been conserved by his regular and correct life, rendered the case a hopeful one, still one requiring every attention and care. He said something about myself in that matter that I will not repeat. All I said was, I had a servant worth her weight in gold,—Bell."

"That's beyond doubt," said Mr. Barrie and I simultaneously. Mrs. Barrie went on:

"He also said that he had successfully treated similar cases on a method of his own, and that the surroundings of Mr. Barrie's case were such as to make him most anxious to have it treated with scrupulous attention to the most minute details of this new system,—that he would write these out carefully, and be in correspondence with Dr. Stevenson, and come out again if necessary. I asked his

fee; he said not to mind at present, and when I pressed him he said he would write me. He was very particular in writing specific directions; and Dr. Stevenson more fully explained these, so that we were able to carry them out to the letter. Three days after his visit the carrier brought a small hamper of medicines and cordials from the professor, with full instructions as to their use, and a letter to myself" — here she sobbed. Tears had frequently trembled in her eyes as she told the story of the illness, but they trickled down as she spoke of the letter.

Drying her tears, however, she proceeded: "In the letter he expressed his gratitude at having it in his power to minister 'to the necessities of saints,' his delight at having his method of treatment tried so completely, and"—here she halted; then after a moment's pause said, "Well, I'm quoting,—and with such nursing. He added that as he had promised to refer to the fee, he would say that he would be more than repaid by Mr. Barrie's recovery, as it would fortify him in adopting the treatment generally, and announcing it to the profession. Mr. Barrie had meantime got 'the turn.' I snatched a few minutes to reply to the professor's letter. It was written with a full heart, but a shaking hand. I fear *my* letter was but a sorry production; but," she said firmly, and

with a beaming eye, "the professor's letter is lying in my mother's Bible, beside my marriage lines and little Nellie's hair. It is not exactly as he sent it; there are not only the crumpled spots where my tears fell, but under his signature I wrote, before putting it amongst my treasures, 'the Good Samaritan.' Mr. Barrie wonders why I did not rather write the 'Beloved Physician;' that would have done very well, but I like 'the Good Samaritan' better; and now that I think of it, I will get it out to-morrow, and Mr. Barrie can add 'the Beloved Physician' himself."

She did not tell then, but I heard from the "carrier," that the basket in which the cordials were sent was first well washed and bleached by Bell, then filled with the best her hen-roost, and dairy, and garden could afford, and sent to the physician without any address,—Bell herself having charged the carrier "just to hand it in an' come away,—no' to say where it cam' frae."

Mrs. Barrie did not confine herself merely to matters of thrift and housekeeping, but dwelt on the higher feelings of our nature, the social sympathies, and the ties and joys of home and kindred. But I could not do justice to the fine taste with which she described or enforced these.

Mr. Barrie occasionally joined in the conversation ;

but he was interjectional, and more impressive from his tone, the expression of his countenance, and his slight gestures, than from the words he used. When the soiled dress was spoken of, he said with a smile, "Birniepark,"—referring to an awkward servant having spilt a sauceboat full of gravy on Mrs. Barrie's wedding dress. When "breakage" was mentioned, he said, "Janet,"—recalling an officious, brisk young lady, who, at one of the annual tea meetings of the Sabbath-school teachers in the manse, had seized the tray with great bounce, to *help away* with the tea-things, and had literally succeeded, as in crossing the lobby she stumbled, and every dish was broken. When the physician's letter was referred to, he merely said, "Ebenezer,—Epaphroditus,—Onesiphorus."

Mrs. Barrie finished by giving a few simple rules which she had herself tried to carry out: "Never buy anything you do not need; look twice at a cheap bargain; use the least of everything, lose the least of everything, and make the most of everything; save all you can, use all you can, and be sure and give all you can. So much for the housekeeping; but be as careful of your heart as of your purse, and be kindly affectioned one towards another, in honour preferring one another."

Mr. Barrie summed up with: "In fact, be judeecious."

Practise economy, not parsimony; use the world as not abusing it; owe no man anything but to love one another,—a debt that can never be fully discharged. Love begets love.”

Glancing at the timepiece, I saw that the hour was rather later than I imagined; and having risen, I was thanking Mrs. Barrie for her hearty counsel, and had added that I hoped she would call at Greenknowe before the marriage, and be as kind to Agnes as she had been to me. I saw by Mrs. Barrie’s eye that she had me again.

“I suppose,” said she with great glee, “you will not wish me to call on you both after you are married! I quite expected you to invite me; but Agnes will be calling to say good-bye.”

“What!” said I; “good-bye? She’s not going so far away.”

“But,” said she, “she will make a P.P.C. call.”

“A what?” said I; for I did not know what P.P.C. meant.

“Ask her,” replied she; “I dare not trust myself to quote French in full now.”

I had begun to thank Mr. Barrie, when he said gravely, “Mr. Martin, I greatly desire that there shall be family worship in every house in the parish, and I impress this on all intending young housekeepers;

so you will kindly take the service for me to-night. And without waiting for a reply, he moved towards the handle of the bell, and was pulling it (it was a little bone barrel at the end of a bit of green cord), saying, "We'll call Bell in," when I put my hand on his, and said excitedly, "Mr. Barrie! please, Mr. Barrie, do excuse me,—pray, don't ask me to-night, please don't!" for the sudden call and circumstances made me quite nervous.

Mrs. Barrie kindly came to my relief by wishing me a hearty good-night, and saying, "Mr. Martin may have another call to make to-night, my dear."

Mr. Barrie followed me to the lobby, and said he hoped I would excuse his rather hasty invitation to conduct family worship; he had forgotten the apostolic injunction, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." Then, taking me warmly by the hand, he said, "I rejoice with you to-night at the step you are taking; it is not only judeecious, but promises to be a very happy one for yourselves and your circle. But pray remember the '*Nisi Dominus frustra*' of your college days,—'Except the Lord do build the house, they labour in vain that build it.'" There was another firm shake of the hand as we parted; and I heard his voice saying something about taking care of the slippery roads, as I was "some other body's property now."

CHAPTER III.

THE MARRIAGE AND THE HOME-COMING.

“We’re a’ noddin’,
Nid, nid, noddin’,
We’re a’ noddin’
At our house at hame.”

MY stay at the manse had been longer than I expected. When I reached Greenknowe, I had hardly recovered from the scare I had got by the proposal to conduct family worship, and my account of the visit to the manse, although short, was a jumble about Bell, and skates, and good Samaritans. Agnes looked at me anxiously, and said, “Are you well enough? You look excited.” I told her what had excited me, at which she first laughed, then looked thoughtful, then sympathetic, and said, “You’re tired, and it is late; come over to-morrow night, if you can;” and after a pause she said, “My mother has often wished me to ask you to make family worship here, and you will just begin to-morrow night.”

This was adding fuel to flame; so, observing my restlessness, she said, "Oh, Robert, forgive me for adding to your excitement" (that was easily done,—the forgiveness, I mean); "you need a good night's rest." I did very much, but I did not get it.

I went to bed immediately on going home, tossed and tumbled about, angry at myself for being so unwilling to undertake a duty which, as at one time an aspirant to the ministry, should not have unhinged me. Then my conscience smote me for being undecided in religious matters; then I resolved to be more decided, and began to compose my first social prayer. As I tried this, I found one bit forgotten as another was being thought over. I was about to rise and *write* a prayer, but checked myself, and resolved to be a *man* (when a man does this, he is more likely to prove himself a child), and to look for help when it was needed where it was to be found.

Next night found me at Greenknowe, quietly retailing Mr. and Mrs. Barrie's sayings; and the "books" were brought in before supper, and I at least got through. Agnes said she was much obliged to me. Mrs. Stewart said little more than "Thank you;" but after the old lady had retired, Agnes told me, in an indirect, quiet way, that Mr. M'Nab never referred to her mother as "His aged servant," which I had

unwisely done, but as "the handmaid of the Lord." A young college friend had lost a legacy by a similar mistake in the case of a maiden aunt. My readers will excuse me for leaving this bit to suggest its own lesson. Mrs. Stewart was barely sixty years old: how our ideas of "aged" change as we age ourselves!

I carried quite a bundle of letters to the post office that night, many of them invitations to the marriage, others P.P.Cs., which I got explained by Agnes, after a quick sideward movement of the head down, followed by a slow movement of it up, and an inquiring stare, as much as to say, Do you *really* not know? "It's *pour prendre congé*—to take leave, to say good-bye."

"Oh," said I, "Mrs. Barrie spoke about P.P.C.; and when I asked the meaning, she said something about French, and to ask you. That's P.P.C., is it?"

The marriage took place, but I spare my readers an account of it. I could not describe the dresses so as to *inform* the ladies, nor the presents (which now-a-days are so numerous and costly as to have to undergo the trying ordeal of being laid out for exhibition in a special room), for these were more useful than ornamental. Many of them were esteemed for the donor's sake rather than for their intrinsic value; none more so than a book, called *Cottage Comforts*,

from Mrs. Barrie, which proved very useful to us, and became Agnes's present to young housekeepers she was interested in, many of whom in after life thanked her for the good hints and help it gave them. Mr. Barrie gave me a copy of the *Confession of Faith*, and asked me to read it carefully. Although it was the standard of the Church to which I belonged, and I had declared my adherence to it, I had till then hardly opened it. When I did look into it, many of its statements seemed harsh, and stated so baldly in logical order and theological language, that they seemed to me very different from the teachings of the Bible, interwoven and relieved as these are by illustration, narrative, and incident; and I still think, because it wants the charm of the associations with which the doctrines are joined in the Scriptures, that it is apt to bewilder, if not to prejudice unfavourably, the ordinary reader; but the more I examine it, and compare the parallel passages (*i.e.* references to texts confirming the doctrines), I see it deserves the name Mr. Barrie gives it in its relation to the Bible,—“an excellent summary of which is to be found in the Westminster Confession of Faith.” Although the excellence is more marked than the summariness; it is a pretty long *summary*. The “Apostles' Creed” comes nearer that.

Dinner followed almost immediately after the mar-

riage. There was a little speechmaking after dinner, or "the collation," as Mrs. M'Nab called it. Mr. Barrie, in proposing our health, was neat and hearty. He had a hit at me "once thinking of getting married;"—told a story of a lad who, when going to seek a wife, looked so unhappy that his mother said to him, "Keep up yer heart, Johnnie, ma man; faint heart never won fair lady;" "Eh, mother," said Johnnie, "I've mair need to keep it down, for *it's* amaist in my mou' a'ready;"—wished us many happy days, and hoped our married life would be happier than his had been. It took some of us a few seconds to see that *this* was a very, very good wish.

My uncle proposed Mrs. Stewart's health. He was a plain, blunt man, and spoke of her as his "auld friend." Mrs. Stewart was in grand spirits, and said, "Auld, Mr. Martin! auld! I'm no' sae auld as you." "Weel, ye're as auld-like, ony way," said the honest man; and Mrs. Stewart and he joined as heartily in the laugh that followed as any of us, and it was so long that he ended his speech by a nod to Mrs. Stewart, and "Here's t'ye, mem; your very good health."

A confirmed bachelor proposed the bridesmaids. He was, of course, unable to do justice to the toast, with "*such*" bridesmaids, etc.

Mr. M'Nab gave the health of Mr. Barrie. He

spoke well; my uncle said he had "a grand stock o' dictionar' and college-bred words."

Some songs were sung. The bachelor friend had a fine voice, and had cultivated it carefully. Few could equal him at "Gae fetch to me a pint o' wine;" and when pressed to sing it, he bantered about having lost his best song, "O Nanny, wilt thou gang wi' me?" he had not even got round sufficiently to try "My Nannie's awa'," but he hoped he would regain his spirits; he would try "When our king comes o'er the water," and gave it in fine style. A cousin of Agnes's, her senior by a very few years, sang "A'bodys like to get married but me," with sweetness and humour, the last three verses so very well as to put our bachelor friend in great spirits. When she finished the following verse, the last one—

"It's hard to tak' shelter behint a laigh dyke,
It's hard to gang wi' ane ye dinna weel like,
It's hard to forsake ane ye fain wad gang wi',
But it's harder that a'bodys married but me,"—

my uncle said, "Ye maun be ill to please; it canna hae been for want o' offers." He was then pressed to sing, and did his best; the words were new to all of us, but the tune, "Johnnie Cope," was familiar. He said it was written by a friend of his, a farmer beside him. We suspected that the author was

always very near him. He had sung it at the rent dinner in his laird's house, and the laird was delighted with it, although it “wasna jist exactly what he wad like to happen to himsel’ :”

THE FROSTIT CORN.

Tune—“JOHNNIE COPE.”

- “Oh, I’m a young farmer hard set by the frost,
My gude expectations hae sairly been cross’t,
My craps that look’t weel, they are noo nearly lost,
By thir calamitous mornin’s.
- “In the midst o’ last simmer it was understude
That we wad a’ haen plenty o’ gude halesome fude,
For man an’ for beast ; an’ we ettled to dae gude,
But the frost it has backit it sairly.
- “An’ when that the frost it did gang awa’,
The rain it came on like to ruin us a’ ;
It rained that lang, that it shortened the straw,
An’ added aye the mair till our mornin’.
- “But yet for a’ that we maunna compleen,
It was sae ordered, or it ne’er wad ha’ been ;
It was maybe for our gude, tho’ *that* hasna yet been seen,
For to humble our pride in the mornin’.
- “When things lookit weel, a scheme I had laid,
I promised to marry a bloomin’ young maid,
To share o’ the o’ercome when a’thing was paid,
But the frost it has backit it sairly.
- “But my crap as it is, it is noo in the yaird,
An’ still for the lassie I hae a regaird ;
I think that I’ll marry her, an’ no pay the laird,—
Let him ken there was frost in the mornin’.
- “An’ if he should break out in ragin’ and strife,
He may weel tak’ the gear, but he’ll no tak’ my life ;
If I should hae naething else, I will aye hae my wife
To comfort me in the mornin’.”

Need I say that the applause was loud, and long, and *real*?

Marriage trips, wedding tours, were not so common forty years ago as they are now : we had none. Shortly after my uncle's song was finished, and with the glee it inspired still beaming in their faces, the guests went to *our* house. We were the last to leave, which we did under a shower of old shoes "for luck." There was the usual gathering of noisy children round the bride's door, waiting for the coppers scattered on such occasions ; and as they scrambled for them, we got into the drosky, and were driven home, followed by an increasing number of children cheering in an intermittent way, all anxious to be in time for the "scatterin' o' the ha'pennies," which had to be repeated at the bridegroom's door. There was an outer circle of grown-up people, who showed their goodwill by a welcoming cheer. As Agnes crossed her threshold, my oldest sister, who had come to "receive" her, allowed an oat cake to fall on the young wife's head ; and the younger folks scrambled for the bits, as these had some not very clearly defined faculty of foretelling their future luck, especially if confirmed by a dream over the brides cake. Agnes was placed by the matrons present at the head of the supper table, and thereby installed as mistress of the house. After supper

there were games, in which the elderly folks joined, the older men with demonstrative glee. The more matronly matrons required a good deal of pressing—their "play days were bye;" but most of them went through a short game, others kept remonstrating with the old men, especially their own husbands, who were oftener up, and who even when looking on capered and "hooched" (*i.e.* shouted merrily):—"Tammass, Tammass! ye're forgettin' yersel'";—"Stop that auld man o' mine; he'll hurt himsel'";—"Oh man, James, ye're ower auld for sic nonsense. Let the young folks carry on the games noo."

After the first round of games, in which all the guests—old and young—took part, and the seniors had shown their *skill*, these mostly settled to be spectators, all the while enjoying the frolics of the young folk as much as their own canty cracks, whilst the younger portion had the carrying on of the fun, which they did right merrily. Old Scotch songs were sung, and kindly sentiments uttered, as those will readily believe whose memory can recall the homely convivialities of forty or fifty years ago. My uncle was pressed by old and young to sing another song like "The Frostit Corn,"—"one we did not hear every day,"—"a real country-fireside song." He said he "would gie ane; it was no' as gude as 'The Frostit Corn.' It

was ca'd 'The Country Rockin'.' But maist o' ye'll no' ken what a rockin' is. It's a gatherin' o' neebors for a night's diversion. The women brang their 'rocks'—things for spinning woo' or lint wi', an' birled an' span an' crackit awa'. I've seen them hunders o' times in my young days, but there's no sic a thing noo as 'the rock and the wee pickle tow.' Mind it's hamespun an' countrified." Then he began:—

THE COUNTRY ROCKIN'.

"It has often been alloo'd that the best o' human life
Is the hours o' social harmony when free from party strife,
When freendship smiles and love beguiles 'mang lads an' lasses
kindly jokin';
These joys we only find when assembled at a country rockin'.

"When the gudeman frae the fire bids us frankly venture ben,
In hamely sangs and social joys a nicht wi' him to spen',
The welcome kind attracts each mind, we needna ither friendly
token,
When we join the honest social core assembled at a country
rockin'.

"Noo, since we're cheerie met for a nicht o' social joy,
Let every care be banished far that wad our peace destroy;
When friendship smiles and love beguiles, at sangs we'll hae a
hearty yokin',
An' we'll chant the lays o' Robbie Burns, wha first described the
country rockin'.

"An' when we tak' our hameward road, it's no taen sair amiss,
Tho' frae some bonny smilin' face we steal a wee bit kiss,
Her heart to move, an' tell our love in vows that never will be
broken,
Till in some biggin' o' our ain we hae a hearty country rockin'."

In the enthusiastic chorus every voice joined, and

over and over again after the last verse did the chorus ring through the room; and, "Anither, Mr. Martin, anither like that!" was rained on the canny man. During the pause, Auntie Mattie, a sister of Mrs. Stewart's, said, "Sing the 'Farmer's Ingle,' Mr. Martin, for auld langsyne. I like it better than the 'Rockin'."

"Sae dae I," said my uncle, "but it's threadbare noo."

"Threadbare!" said Auntie Mattie; "threadbare, did ye say, Mr. Martin? A sang that's worth ca'in' a sang at a' will never get threadbare, ony mair than the sun 'll get auld-fashioned altho' we see't every day o' our lives; and ye'll surely sing't to obleege me?"

Auntie Mattie was a sonsy, kindly, cheery woman—a'bodys body; but she hardly expected that my uncle would bring her in for a song by the paction he made.

"Mattie," said he,—“oh, I beg yer pardon, I should hae ca'd ye Mrs. Dickson, but ye lookit sae like what ye did langsyne that Mattie cam' oot afore I kent,—I'll sing the 'Farmer's Ingle' if ye'll sing the 'Lawland lads think they are fine.' Ye sang't at our waddin', an' it's ringin' in my heid yet. Thae auld sangs are worth a bushel o' the new trash the folk ca' sangs noo-a-days. Come awa', my bonnie leddy, let's hear the 'Lawland Lads,' and ye'll hae the 'Farmer's Ingle' as weel as I can gie't; that ye will."

Auntie Mattie said, "Hoots!" and "Nonsense!" and

that "her voice was clean gane;" but her singing of the "Lawland Lads" contradicted all these statements, and was so sweet, and so true, and so natural, as to command strict silence at the second note, which deepened as she proceeded. The verse—

"Few compliments between us pass,
I ca' him aye my Hieland laddie,
An' he ca's me his Lawland lass,
An' rows me in his tartan plaidie"—

as *she* sung it, was a thing to be remembered. When she had finished and the sincere applause was over, which took the shape of little complimentary speeches to her, and expressions of mutual delight to one another, rather than the noisy demonstration which had followed my uncle's songs, my uncle said, "Eh, Mattie—hoots! excuse me. Eh, Mrs. Dickson, there's no' a fail'd inch o' ye. That sang was like caller air; it was jist grand, splendid a'thegither. It's taen the breath frae me completely. I daurna sing after that."

"Come away, Mr. Martin," said she; "a bargain's a bargain. Come away wi' the 'Farmer's Ingle,'" which he did. And I give the song as he sang it, as, although common in country districts in my young days, it is little sung now. The chorus was well known to us all, and we *did* join in it:—

"Let Turks triumph, let tyrants pray,
Let poets sing melodiously,
Let Turks triumph and priests live single,
But my delight's at the farmer's ingle.

Chorus—For the farmer's ingle is the place
Where freedom shines on ilka face.
My wish is while on earth to mingle
Wi' gude honest people at the farmer's ingle.

"In winter when the frost an' snaw
Drives a' the masons frae the wa',
Your hearts wad warm and yer ears wad tingle
To hear the cracks at the farmer's ingle.

Chorus—For the farmer's ingle is the place, etc.

"The British ship's the seaman's boast,
Success to tredd's the merchant's toast,
The miser for his money does pingle,
But my delight's in the farmer's ingle.

Chorus—For the farmer's ingle is the place, etc.

"The sailor boldly ploughs the main,
The soldier flies o'er heaps of slain,
But my wish on earth's ne'er to live single;
Here's a bumper to the farmer's ingle.

Chorus—For the farmer's ingle is the place," etc.

The "thinking of going home," which had been hinted at once or twice before, was now general, and the party broke up with good wishes and kind feelings warmly expressed: "We've haen a grand nicht o't!"—"Lang may ye be spared to ane anither, an' aye be as happy as ye've made your freends the nicht!"—crowned by "Auld Langsyne," with, as the play-bills have it, "the whole strength of the company."

Our house was above the shop ; separate villas, now so common for tradesmen and shopkeepers, were then only occupied by the gentry. The system of villas in the outskirts has shortened the hours of business, and is healthier, but the above-the-shop houses kept a man, and often, be it said **with** all honour, his wife, thoroughly at the head of affairs. In many businesses, then as yet, the wives were invaluable. Who cannot recall the active, polite, effective way in which the Mistress "kept the shop" ? and how nice it was to be served by her own self, with her interchange of homely civilities, and the ready knack she had of hitting on what was wanted ! This good custom is happily still not uncommon. Long may it continue !

My business did not require Agnes to be in the shop, but in my absence she used to look in to help the lad or lads, and took to it, and the customers took to her. Often, also, when the assistants were out, she came down to keep me (maybe to keep herself) from wearying ; and she soon made such changes as only an orderly woman can devise ; and from being interested, she easily became acquainted with the details, and made alterations here and reforms there that resulted in our increased prosperity and comfort. We went on steadily making things better, soon got to be easier in money matters, then laid past a little, then looked out

for some investment. But I am the writer, not the subject, of these "bits," and will spare my readers the dry details of a homely life in a country village. I only add that we had no extra call on our means in the way of having to bring up a family. This was a sore subject many years ago, but it is a mere fact now.

My wife being anxious to get everything to her mind about the house, began next morning to clear up, and sent for some folks who were very glad to get some of the substantial remains to eke out their scanty tables. One of these was Peggy Ritchie. She had been a servant in my father's house at the time of his death, and my housekeeper for nearly a year thereafter. She had married Gavin Sinclair, a widower with a moderately-sized family. Her father was the sexton and minister's man, but now unfit for work, and Gavin, or Guy as he was commonly called, "officiated" instead of old Adam Ritchie. Peggy said she was "thankfu' to get onything, forbye being proud to be mindit, for Guy was very slack the noo, there werena near sae mony deaths as ane would expect this could weather. It was very unfortunate, it came at an ill time ; if there wasna something doin' in the kirkyard soon, it wad be a bad job. Guy could say, as the beadle o' Borthwick said to the Lord Chief Baron, 'he hadna buried a leevin' craitur for six weeks.'"

“ And how’s your father, Peggy ? ” said my wife.

“ Very middlin’, Mrs. Martin ” (Peggy used *Mrs.* very often and *very* graciously); “ but he was sayin’ to Guy last nicht, after Mr. Barrie gaed out,—he ca’d in to see my faither; he often ca’s. I’m aye glad to see him. He kens what puir folk need in cauld weather. Well, as I was sayin’, my faither says to Guy, ‘ Be thankfu’ ye hae Mr. Barrie to deal wi’; he’s a considerate man an’ a gentleman. Ane o’ the ministers before him, no’ to name onybody,—it’s as weel no’ to gie names,—weel, ane o’ the ministers in my day,’ says my faither, ‘ was the maist pernickety, impatient, bathersome craitur’ ever was seen. If he wanted onything, ye must do’t in an instant, or he was fair dancin’ wi’ passion. It was a thrang time in the kirkyard, a sair winter, and I had some idle men helpin’ me. The minister was getting something done to the manse, and aye send-sendin’ for me to help, and to come that very moment. I’ve actually seen me,’ says my faither, ‘ hae to bring men out o’ the very grave to serve him.’ My faither’s sair failed.”

Knowing that Peggy had been my housekeeper, my wife asked if there was anything I was specially fond of, any special dishes, etc.

Peggy’s sense of importance was flattered at being *consulted* (as she afterwards put it), and she said,

with a gesture of surprise, "The maister,—Maister Martin,—there was nae man could be easier pleased wi' his meat than him. Gie him a lamb leg an' a berry tart to his denner, an' he was perfectly satisfied." So he may, thought my wife.

"Speakin' about denners," continued Peggy, "Miss Park got a terrible fricht last Saturday nicht. The flesher's laddie was takin' a sheep's heid to the Mathiesons, but as there was naebody in the house, he raps on Miss Park's door,—she stops next them. Weel, her servant was out, an' she answers the door hersel'. She's an awfu' nervish craitur', so she opens a wee bit o' the door, a' shakin', and disna the laddie shove the sheep's heid bang in? The door was that little open that the neck rubbit against her hands; and he bawls out, 'Mathieson's heid,' an' let it fa' in the lobby an' awa' in a moment. She was that fear'd that she couldna move, but keepit starin' awa' at the ugly black head, thinking a' sorts o' things. When her servant cam' in she was fair chitterin' wi' fear. It was real thochtless o' the laddie."

Blinkbonny had its events and "foys" (*i.e.* entertainments), but nothing of special interest occurred until the Disruption of 1843, of which I will treat in my next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO SIDES OF THE CHURCH QUESTION.

“They lay aside their private cares
To mind the Kirk and State affairs ;
They’ll talk o’ patronage and priests
Wi’ kindling fury in their breasts,
Or tell what new taxation ’s comin’,
And ferlie at the folk in Lon’on.”—*Burns*.

THE agitation which resulted in the Disruption of 1843, when nearly five hundred ministers left the Established Church of Scotland and formed the “Free Church,” extended even to the quiet parish of Blink-bonny, although Mr. Barrie had not taken an active part in the conferences held on the subjects in dispute between the Government and the Non-Intrusionists, as they were sometimes called. He rather avoided the subject; but in the presbytery his attitude indicated that his sympathies were with those who ultimately formed the Free Church,—so much so that many of his friends remonstrated with him, urging him to be careful, to consider his family, not to commit himself hastily. The latter advice Mr. Barrie carried out by thanking

his advisers very sincerely, assuring them that he would endeavour to act conscientiously and "judeeciously;" and although he did not commit himself, his answer was made the basis of different conclusions, according as the "conscientiously" or the "judeeciously" was put foremost.

He more nearly committed himself to Bell than to any other person, and this accidentally. She was the head, the only gardener, and early spring found her deeply absorbed in the arrangement of the season's crops. She had already planted peas and beans, and sundry vegetables; had carefully cut the seed of the early potatoes, making each potato yield as many bits with eyes or buds as she thought safe; and had the "dibble" in her hand to form the holes into which to drop the seed, when Mr. Barrie, returning from the village, stopped at the "break" which she was beginning to plant.

He never passed Bell without some kindly word. In the garden it was generally, "Well, Bell, always at it?" and Bell's "Yes, sir" followed him, for he generally walked on. But on this occasion he stood for a few seconds, long enough for Bell to look at him inquiringly, then to wonder whether to speak or not. At length Mr. Barrie said, with something like an introductory sigh:

“Well, Bell, planting the early potatoes, I see. How will you look if we have to flit soon and leave the crop to some other body?”

“Flit!” said Bell; “flit! What d’ye mean, sir? We’ll flit nane;” and forgetting her usual good manners, she added, “Ye havena gotten a call to ony ither kirk that I’ve heard o’, or to ony o’ the big town kirks, have ye, sir?”

“No, not exactly that, Bell; but we *may* have to leave the manse for all that. But if we have, we will leave the garden in such a state as to be a credit to us.” Then collecting himself, and observing her perplexed face, he made a passing remark on the weather, and had moved towards the manse, too confused to be able to reply to Bell’s practical question, which cut him to the quick, simple as it was, “What for did ye no’ speak about that before I cut the pitaties, sir?”

The question was not asked in Bell’s usual respectful tone, and although she saw that Mr. Barrie had got into the house, she kept looking at the closed door as if it should answer her; then slowly surveyed the garden, the mould of which had been enriched by her industry. She rested her eye first on what she had already planted, next on what she intended to plant; wistfully on the rows that were already above the

ground, and that had an hour before been her pride ; then looked again at the manse door with an expression of bewilderment. She took the hamper which contained the seed - potatoes in the one hand, still holding the dibble in the other, and walked dreamily round the parts of the garden that were planted. The pace was very unlike her everyday one ; it was slow, heavy, interrupted. Every few steps she looked around her solemnly, until she reached the top of the garden, when, as if some forgotten engagement had flashed across her mind, she walked briskly to the out-house, laid down her perplexing seed-potatoes, locked the door, and tidied herself more quickly and more carelessly than usual. Putting on her shawl and a knitted worsted black cap or "mutch" with a crimson border (for she wore a bonnet only on Sundays), something like a hood (it had a name, which I now forget), she went to Mrs. Barrie to inquire if she needed anything from the village,—that being Bell's way of asking whether she could get out for a short time.

"Nothing, Bell," said Mrs. Barrie, "nothing at all that I remember of ; and I am anxious to have as little as possible in the house at present."

This added to Bell's confusion and quickened her step. She made straight for the village. I happened to be at the door at the time, and, struck with the

smartness with which she was walking, I apprehended that there might be something wrong at the manse, and had taken a step or two towards her. While yet about two yards distant she asked quickly, "Hoo's the garden doing, Mr. Martin?"

"Just middlin', Bell; but come round and see it."

As we went she further asked, "Have ye gotten your early taties in yet?"

"No," said I; "my garden is far behind this year. I have been trying to get that house ready for the Whitsunday term. Ye'll see that we're putting a better house on the Knowe Park? It's a nice stance. The old cottage was done, so we're putting up a good plain house; but the plasterers have dilly-dallied; they're a provoking set."

We were now in the garden. Bell's first remark was, "This is no' like you, Mr. Martin; but, however, I want to ask ye a secret" (so Bell put it). "Can you tell me if Mr. Barrie's gotten a call, or if he's likely to get a call, to ony other kirk?"

"Not that I know or have heard of."

Then she told me very circumstantially what Mr. Barrie had said, and what Mrs. Barrie had said, and ended by asking, "What can *you* mak' o' what he said about the taties?"

I tried to explain that it was possible that many

ministers would leave the Church of Scotland on account of something the Government had done.

“What!” said Bell firmly; “that cannot be—that’s no’ possible. The Government wadna daur to meddle wi’ Mr. Barrie. There may be as gude ministers, but there’s nane better. Let them try to put out Mr. Barrie, and they would see a bonnie stramash,—that they would. Leave the manse! Na; thae covenantin’ times are a’ past. Just let Government try’t.”

I said that it was not at all likely that force would be required, as I believed that if the Government persisted in doing what the ministers thought wrong, the ministers would leave the Church quietly rather than submit to have their rights and those of the Christian Church interfered with.

“There’s nae Government will ever gang against gude ministers, at ony rate against Mr. Barrie; they’re the best friends the Government has,” said Bell. Then looking at it in her particular light, she added, “Will ony ither body, Government or no Government, get the peas and cabbage and taties out o’ *our* garden?” for Bell was an active partner.

“I hope not,” said I, “but it’s not *very* unlikely.”

“If I thocht that, I would neither plant nor sow anither dreel—that I would not; and if you’ll take the early taties I’ve cut, I’ll *sell* ye them. They’re a grand

kind, the auld early Dons,—grand growers, lots at every shaw, and gude eaters,—nothing to beat them for size and quality.”

I agreed to take Bell’s seed-potatoes, which partly pacified her ; but she came back on, “ It’s no’ possible ! Leave the manse—na ! ” until I said that the Knowe Park garden would need to be put right at once, that it was very good soil, that I would be happy to buy all her spare plants and seeds, and that she should still keep the manse garden right, as there was no saying what might happen.

Bell gave a qualified assent to this proposal : “ She would see ; but she maun awa’ hame. She would need to take something up with her ; ” the something was a bunch of spunks (bits of thin split wood, very dry, about six inches long, tipped with sulphur, used for lighting candles and lamps, unknown now that lucifer matches are so common) and a few pounds of salt.

Mr. Barrie looked in on me shortly after Bell had left, and after a little general talk he quietly remarked that the house—villa, he termed it—was getting on, and that it looked a nice place. “ Was I going to build on the east side of the Knowe Park ? Had I any tenant in view ? What would be the rent ? Would it be ready by Whitsunday—and dry ? ”

His manner and precision evinced something more than mere friendly interest, and following as they did so much in the train of Bell's visit, I concluded that he would "come out" if the Government did not yield. It had been evident for some time that his sympathies were with what was then called the "Evangelical" party, although that name was by him considered unfair to the other side, and he preferred calling it the protesting party; but he had taken no prominent part in the public discussions, and was scrupulously careful about introducing ecclesiastical politics into his pulpit ministrations. "The good seed is the Word of God," he would often say; "and as ordained to minister to the souls of my parishioners, I try to preach it faithfully, fully, and practically, avoiding controversy of all kinds, political, ecclesiastical, theological, or dogmatic. The only way to do real good, even in opposing error or bigotry, is to preach the truth in love."

April had passed; May had covered the earth with beauty, and blossom, and promise. Never did the manse look so well, or its surroundings more delightful, than on the evening before Mr. Barrie left for the General Assembly in Edinburgh. I made an errand to the manse, ostensibly to ask him to procure a certain book for me when in town, but really to see

if I could pick up an inkling of his mind on the Church controversy, and to offer to be of any service in my power.

Mrs. Barrie and he were sauntering in the garden. He was grave, and as they stopped opposite some familiar flower, both seemed sad. Bell (a most unusual thing for her) was stealthily eyeing them from the kitchen window, having turned up the corner of the little green-striped dimity under-screen. When she saw me, she signalled me to meet her at the back of the manse by jerking her thumb in that direction, and added a slight trembling motion of her clenched hand, to express further that she wanted me to do so without Mr. and Mrs. Barrie's knowing it. When I reached the back court, there she was, and she at once took speech in hand.

"Whatever's gaun to happen, Mr. Martin? The minister has been bundle-bundlin' in the study for twa or three days. Mrs. Barrie has been clearin' oot auld corners, or rather searchin' into them, for there's no' much to clear out that's either useless or lumbery. Is't possible we maun leave? It's no' possible. I've a gude mind to speak to Mr. Barrie mysel'. Sir John was here last night, and I heard him say as he gaed through the lobby, 'For all our sakes, for your own sake, for your family's sake, for the sake of the Church

of our fathers; for His sake who wishes all His people to be one, think over the matter again before you make a schism in His body. Carry out the good doctrine you preached the other day when lecturing on the town clerk of Ephesus, that we "ought to be quiet, and do nothing rashly." Mr. Barrie only said, 'Thank you, Sir John;' but as he was coming 'ben' the lobby from seeing Sir John away, I took the liberty o' saying, 'Sir John's a clever man, a sensible man, and he's aye been our friend. So, sir, excuse me for saying that I hope you will'—but I got no further; I saw the tear was in Mr. Barrie's e'e, and that fairly upset me." Then she added, "Will ye no' speak till him, Mr. Martin, seriously and firmly? Leave the manse, and the kirk, and the garden!—I wadna leave them if I was him, unless they sent a regiment of dragoons."

I said I would try. "Na," said she, "ye maun baith try't and do't too. He's gaun to Edinburgh the morn to the Assembly, and they say he'll settle whether to leave the Kirk or bide in't before he comes back here again."

Leaving Bell, I came to the front of the manse, and stood for a little admiring the scene. The evening sun was about to set behind the western hills. Nature was in her summer mantle of beauty and verdure,—

the garden smiling at my feet; the fields beyond, green, loamy, and rich; the stream glistening and murmuring in the valley; the distant hills lighted up with the evening glow; the clouds red, golden, and grey, massed or straggling over the glorious sky. I felt with Bell that to leave such a place was no easy matter, and as I had given little attention to the Church controversy, I was at a loss what to say. Mr. and Mrs. Barrie observed me, and came forward. After a quiet greeting, I said, "This is a lovely scene. I find myself quoting from *Marmion*, 'Who would not fight for such a land?'"

I had given the quotation strongly; it startled Mr. Barrie. He said softly and dreamily, as if speaking to himself, "Without were *fightings*, within were fears;" then looking me steadily in the face he said, "I go to Edinburgh to-morrow,—a most eventful journey for me and mine. In all probability I will return disjoined from the Established Church of Scotland, and no longer minister of the parish of Blinkbonny. Excuse me, Mr. Martin, for feeling perplexed and anxious."

Bell had by this time become a listener, having crept forward very quietly. She *looked* at me with an imploring face to speak out. I tried to say something, but Mr. Barrie's look was so calm and overpowering,

that I could only get out "that I dared not presume to advise in the matter; that several of his people would follow him if he did find it his duty to come out; and that the Lord would provide."

This was too much or rather too little for Bell, so she joined the colloquy, addressing herself, however, to me. "Maybe He will, if there's a real need-be; but what sense or religion either can there be in leaving a kirk and manse provided for us already, and where He has countenanced us and given us peace and prosperity, for a chance o' anither or maybe nane at a' ? I would see anither door opened first; as Sir John said yestreen about the clerk o' the toun o' Ephesus, we should do nothing rashly. Think on Mrs. Barrie an' the bairns, and the garden and the dumb craiturs, and," looking at the churchyard, she added softly, "wee Nellie."

Bell had joined the party suddenly, and the above sentence was finished by her almost in a breath. It made Mr. Barrie wince. Mrs. Barrie saw this, and at once left us; she got Bell to follow her, by saying that doubtless Mr. Martin had business with Mr. Barrie. Mrs. Barrie did her best to soothe Bell by agreeing with her: "Yes, Bell, it will be a severe trial to leave the manse."

"And a terrible risk, too," said Bell. "Oh, mem,

try and dinna let the maister do't, at least no' as suddenly as he speaks of."

"I leave Mr. Barrie entirely to the guidance of his own conscience in the matter. If he goes, I go."

"So will we a', I fancy."

"Well, Bell," said Mrs. Barrie thoughtfully, "we may not be able to keep a servant. If we are, and you are willing to go with us, you will be an immense help to us all."

This overwhelmed Bell. Leaving the manse was bad, but leaving the family was terrible; such a thing had never entered her mind. Luckily the cow "Daisy" began to low impatiently, which relieved Mrs. Barrie of present embarrassment. Bell methodically started for her milking-pail, muttering, "The very coo's no' hersel' the nicht, naether am I; I'm behint time wi' Daisy, and kye should be milkit regular,"—which Bell set about with more than her ordinary vigour, all the time speaking away to Daisy about leaving the manse, and stiffly arguing the matter with the cow. The cow did not seem quite to understand her; she usually did, and answered Bell with her meek eye and stolid face; but Bell's *manner* to-night was abrupt and excited, and Daisy had probably more difficulty in comprehending the *matter*; so she wagged one ear quickly, made sundry short,



BELL AND DAISY. (Page 70).

impatient shakes of her head, and stared intently at Bell, but not with the usual signs of intelligent concert. Daisy couldn't make it out; neither, alas! could Bell.

I did not go into the manse, although Mr. Barrie asked me. I excused myself on the ground of his requiring all the time at his disposal to prepare for to-morrow's journey, but said that many along with myself would wait anxiously for the decision he might make, and I asked him to give me as early intimation of it as he conveniently could, assuring him that I would be most happy to be of any service in my power. He thanked me, and putting his arm in mine walked slowly down the garden. As we passed between its healthy crops and trim flower-beds, he said:

"This is Bell's parish, and well tended it is. I'm very sorry for Bell; it must be a severe trial to her—worthy, honest, laborious Bell!"

We halted at the little wicket gate at the bottom of the garden. There was a sad look on Mr. Barrie's face as he turned round and looked at the pleasantly situated, snug manse. Memory seemed busy unfolding her roll of bygone days. It had been the home of his happy married life, the birthplace of his children. Then he looked at the church: it had been the scene of his labours, the joy of his heart, the place of his

ministry to the flock he loved. Then he looked at the churchyard: there was one little spot specially dear, but many others hallowed in his mind by associations of the kind and good who lay there. So absorbed was he by the reflections awakened by the scene, that he seemed unconscious of my presence, and as his eye travelled from object to object, he spoke sadly and to himself, "Yes, beautiful for situation.—Thou excellest them all.—Olive plants.—Where prayer was wont to be made.—Watch-tower.—Pleasure in her stones.—With Christ; far better.—We shall not all sleep." Then, as if awaking from a dream, he said, "Excuse me, Mr. Martin; the old Adam is too strong for young Melanchthon. Every human consideration urges me to remain in the Church of Scotland. I would exhaust every possible means for the sake of all concerned to avert a disruption, but I cannot, I dare not submit to see her rights infringed or her prerogatives violated; it would be treason to my Master. And bitter, bitter as the alternative is, I will act as my conscience impels me (and I have given the subject the devout consideration it demands), and leave all, although I freely confess it is a sore trial of my faith. I fear as I enter into the cloud. I must walk by faith, not by sight."

There was a nobility, a display of true valour in his

attitude, tone, and expression that awed me. The fire of his words kindled a flame in my heart, which grew in intensity as he proceeded. When he had finished he seemed as if he had been transfigured; his sadness was gone; he looked like a knight challenging a field of foemen. I could only grasp his hand and stumble out, "The battle is the Lord's; be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people and for the cities of our God, and the Lord do that which is good in His sight."

He returned the grasp very warmly, and said, "Exactly; that text must be our motto. I thank you for it. But I am detaining you. I will let you know the result whenever declared; possibly I may be your tenant at Knowe Park." He said this with a pleasant smile; and as we said good-night, I added, "Knowe Park will be made as comfortable as I can make it, although, had I expected such a tenant, I would have made it better."

"It's perhaps as much as we'll can afford," said he cheerfully half-way up the garden. "Good night again."

As I walked homeward I met Sir John M'Lelland. I knew him as a gentleman of the neighbourhood, and had been in the habit of saluting him respectfully, but had rarely spoken to him; I was therefore sur-

prised when he said, "I called at the house, Mr. Martin, but learning you were at the manse, I came to meet you. Have you a spare half-hour? I wish to see you particularly."

"I am quite at your service, Sir John."

"Then take a quiet turn down the road;" which we did. Sir John then began:

"Mr. Martin, I want a long talk with you about Mr. Barrie. I know that you are very intimate with him. I need not tell you that I esteem him very highly. As a minister he has few equals, that we all feel; he is, besides, a gentleman in every sense of the word—a scholar, a man of culture, quite an acquisition to the district. Then Mrs. Barrie is a most delightful creature,—I do not know a more thorough lady than she is; and they have a very nice family—very nice children indeed—good-looking;—so they may well be, considering their parents—the handsomest couple in the parish, I may say in the county. But *that* is by the bye. Well, the party in the Church of Scotland that call themselves the 'Evangelicals,' as if they were the only true preachers of the gospel,—a most unwarrantable and impertinent name for any party to assume, or rather to *adopt*, for they parade it so offensively that it betrays their former orphanage, and they strut about in the plumes they

have stuck on themselves, calling their opponents 'Moderates,' as if that were a term of contempt. It would be more consistent if they'd let their moderation be known to all men;—but *that* is by the bye. Well, these schismatics and agitators—'Evangelicals,' if you like—have raised a hue-and-cry about the Church in danger, and trampling on the rights of the Christian people, and have pestered not only the church courts, but the courts of law and the Government of the country, by their pertinacious intermeddling with time-honoured institutions and the rights of proprietors. And so determined and malignant are the leaders of this movement, that they have dug out one or two exceptional cases (you know the exception proves the rule), and dragged them through the law courts, where they got ignominiously beaten, because justice was administered impartially. This has raised the 'odium theologicum,' the most unreasonable and insatiable of all passions; and instead of acting as law-abiding subjects and as peacemakers, they are determined, if Government, forsooth, will not yield to them, to break up the Church of Scotland if they can! The law has been clearly laid down by the judges of the land, but they demand to be allowed to be a law to themselves."

Here Sir John looked very indignant, then went on

in a calmer tone : "What I cannot understand is, that ministers above all others should object to their own rights being protected. The principal uproar has been about some ministers who were appointed to parishes, but the people would not receive them, and even the presbytery refused to ordain them. Now, especially in the Church of Scotland, every student before he is licensed to preach the gospel has had a complete college education, and several years' training in the divinity halls, and has undergone successfully very searching examinations conducted by eminent professors, and has, moreover, under presbyterial superintendence gone at least creditably through trials for licence, which included sermons on texts assigned to him. Could anything further be desired as a safeguard against unfit men being allowed to be ministers ? It is from such that the patron, who is generally the largest proprietor in the parish, and has therefore the greatest interest in it, must make a selection and present a minister to a vacant parish church, not unfrequently to the church in which he worships. Well, these Evangelicals'—ministers themselves, remember—wish it to be in the power of the members of a church (and you know what a mixture the membership is, of all sorts and conditions—good and indifferent, not to say bad) to reject the minister

appointed by the patron,—a minister trained as I explained before,—and possibly from whim, or spleen, or spite at the patron, to object to his settlement, which can only be done by objecting to his preaching; and to prove their case, I grieve to say, they do not scruple at condemning his services as unedifying, or uninteresting, or unintelligible (very likely to them), or even unsound,—set them up for judges!—and do all in their power to blast the minister's prospects. Does it not strike you, Mr. Martin, as something very strange that ministers should desire to commit themselves to such tribunals in preference to the existing ones?"

I was at a loss what to say and how to get out of the difficulty, when Sir John began again with great animation: "What they aim at seems to be a sort of preaching competition, where the man who has the knack of tickling the ears, or wheedling the affections, or flattering the vanities of a congregation, would certainly outweigh the man of more solid parts. The result would be that young ministers would prepare one or two *taking* sermons, and thereby secure parishes; and what ought to be a congregation of devout worshippers would become a congregation of critics; and some fussy nobody, by dint of sheer impertinence, would set himself—ay, even herself—up as 'grieved at the prospect of the incalculable

injury to be done to the highest interests of the parish,' and with a long face say 'she felt it her duty, her bounden duty, her painful duty,' and stuff of that sort. Dissenting churches have oftener split on the election of preachers than any other thing, and bitter and disgraceful results have followed. In such cases votes are counted, not weighed. I know of a little insignificant 'bodie,'—his neighbours called him 'Little Gab,'—a creature who was in misery through his indolence and his intermeddling with other folk's affairs to the neglect of his own. He was a Dissenter, and at the meetings for choosing a minister in the chapel he went to, he chattered and moved and objected and protested, and was so often on his feet with his 'Moderator, I move,' 'Moderator, I object,' 'Moderator, by the forms of procedure, page, etc.,' that he provoked a smart word from one of their best men every way—in education, position, and judgment. This set the bodie fairly up, and although he richly deserved more than he got, he spoke so glibly that he saddled the church with a minister of whom the late Dr. Hunter, on hearing his first sermon after his ordination—generally a man's best—said to a friend as they came out of the church, 'Ye'll get that ane to bury.' But *that* is by the bye."

As Sir John now looked to me to say something,

I merely added, "That was like the doctor. I think I know the church you refer to; Little Gab was a waspish bodie."

He at once resumed: "I am surprised that a man of good sense and sound judgment like Mr. Barrie should be misled by the noisy demagogues—many of them otherwise good men, but on this subject perfect fanatics. I spoke to him on the subject the other night, but made no impression. Have you remonstrated with him? Did he say anything on the subject to you to-night?"

I told him what had passed at the manse. When he heard of Mr. Barrie's firm resolve, he said very excitedly: "It's utter folly—it's sheer madness—it's social suicide, bringing ruin on his family for a mere phantom of excited sentimentality! Let them stay in the Church and use constitutional means to reform abuses, if any exist. The Church of Scotland has had an honoured past, and must have a glorious future. They vowed to maintain and defend her; they are trying to divide and weaken her. Can they not wait patiently until events are ripe? Progress in a complicated body such as a church is gradual, and should be deliberate. The leaders of this movement are principally men who have risen to ecclesiastical eminence by their popular gifts. Not a few of them

fought bitterly against the Dissenters in the Voluntary controversy (which, by the bye, seems shelved for good and all; the pace was too quick to last), and now they urge their brethren to secede if *their* absurd demands are not immediately conceded. I much doubt if the noisiest now will be the first to come out. If they do, I would not wonder to see them the first to rush back again, and change their 'Retract! no, not a hair's-breadth!' into a breakneck stampede, in which they will crush past their deluded followers, and whine pitifully for pardon and *place*. The State has treated them well, too well, and is entitled to have its conditions fulfilled. They want the pay and the place, but kick at the terms—wish these all one-sided; and when the law steps in with quiet dignity and strict justice to protect the rights of proprietors, ministers, and people alike, and to insist on these being administered according to express statute, the men who vowed to abide by the law either set it at nought, or demand its subservience to their revolutionary ideas. They wish liberty without control, privileges without conditions, and power to exercise despotism without appeal. And because they cannot get it,—because they should not get it,—because, having respect to the welfare alike of Church and State, they must not get it, they keep crying out

about tyranny and treason, and 'spiritual independence,' and what not."

Sir John paused for a little, and I thought he had finished, but something seemed to strike him, and he at it again :

"By the bye, these folks call themselves the Non-Intrusion party. Was ever name so outrageously violated? Is a proprietor an intruder on his own estate? Only a desperate poacher would say yes. Is a man an intruder in his own house? None but a burglar would think so. Is a mother an intruder in her own nursery? Only a vile and cruel nurse, caught in the act of ill-treating the children, would have the audacity to conceive of such a monstrous anomaly. Yet these intruding non-intrusionists say to the State that fostered them and supports them, and that only wishes to have its fundamental principles respected, like the poacher, 'Be off! you have no right here;' like the burglar, 'I want this, and will have it by hook or by crook'—crook should be put first; and like the nurse, 'Get out of this nursery! you have no business here. I'll do what I like, and if you oppose me I'll take the children away from you.' I may be carried away by the strong convictions that force themselves on me as I consider the whole proceedings, the wily, oily sophisms of these

non-intrusionists ; but excuse me, Mr. Martin, for saying that they should take Judas for their patron, and Herod the king—any of the Herods they like—for their foster-brother.”

Sir John seemed to feel that he had gone too far, and excused himself for being so bitter. He was a confirmed Tory, and began about “vote-voting, everything was vote-voting now-a-days since that Reform Bill had passed. Give some men a vote in Kirk or State, and they became self-conceited, consequential creatures. The more they are canvassed, the more unbearable they get. But *that* is by the bye. I presume you are a Whig, Mr. Martin, so we’ll not meddle politics to-night. Then you really think Mr. Barrie will ‘come out’ ?”

“I’m sure of it, Sir John. Mr. Walker of Middlemoor and he start for Edinburgh early to-morrow morning.”

“Mr. Walker!” said Sir John ; “he’s a quiet, peaceable man ; he’ll not be led away by any Will-o’-the-wisp. He’ll smoke over it, and think over it, and come back parish minister of Middlemoor as heretofore. I’m glad that Mr. Walker is going with Mr. Barrie ; he’ll give him the common-sense, considerate view of the question—especially the home view, the family and fireside interest, which seems entirely

ignored. Should a secession take place, there will be a sad awakening when too late to the meaning of these words: 'If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel,'—worse than an infidel—worse!" Then, after a pause of a few seconds, he said, "I'm sorry, very sorry for Mr. Barrie; if it were possible to be angry with such a man, I feel angry—certainly at his conduct, or rather his intentions. But I'm glad Mr. Walker goes with him. I am member of Assembly for a royal burgh, and intend going in the day after to-morrow; I'll set Mr. Walker on Mr. Barrie." Then looking at his watch, he said, "It's getting late; do you think it would be of any use for me to see Mr. Barrie to-night? The fact is, I cannot rest over this matter—it's too—too—too dreadful altogether."

I hinted as politely as I could that I thought nothing would shake Mr. Barrie's resolve. Sir John said "he feared as much, but he would see Mr. Walker and other friends, and try to *save* Mr. Barrie from"—here he hesitated, repeating, "from—from—well, I cannot get a better word—ruin to himself and his family—certain ruin." He shook hands frankly with me, hoped he had not kept me too long, and promised to let me know how matters went; and as he

said good night, he looked towards the manse and said, "I cannot get Mr. Barrie and his family out of my head," then started homewards.

Late as it was, I went to see the new house and garden at Knowe Park. I had urged on the tradesmen, and it was all but finished and *drying* nicely. The garden had received special attention. Except immediately around the new house, it had not been interfered with; and as it was stocked with good fruit-trees and bushes in the days of the old house, these only required trimming and pruning. Bell's cut potatoes and spare plants were further forward than those in the manse garden. When I got home it took a long time to tell Agnes the events of the night. Both of us were puzzled as to whether Mr. Barrie or Sir John was right—we rather inclined to Sir John's notion of patience and prudence; and whilst we admired Mr. Barrie's noble resolution, we, especially Agnes, spoke of "whatever was to become of Mrs. Barrie and the dear bairns?" and did not see through it at all.

CHAPTER V.

BLINKBONNY AND THE DISRUPTION.

“But there are true hearts, which the sight
Of trouble summons forth ;
Though known in days of past delight,
We knew not half their worth.”

Thos. Haynes Bayley.

SIR JOHN had written to his steward to tell me that Mr. Barrie had left the Established Church ; the steward showed me the letter ; it was a compound of amazement, sympathy, and anger.

Scarcely had he finished, when Bell, evidently in a state of great excitement, came in and said, “Eh, Mr. Martin, it’s ower true ; we’ll hae to flit ! Mr. Barrie’s gi’en up the kirk, and he has nae richt noo to the manse. I canna tell exactly when we’ll be putten out, but the mistress says we’ll no’ be allowed to bide lang. I wadna like to be the Government that put Mr. Barrie out o’ house and ha’. Some Mordecai will rise ere lang to gi’e us relief, or some Nehemiah to speak to the king and queen about the desolation and

affliction and reproach. Them that comes to pit us out will maybe find an enemy in the garden, like Ahab in Naboth's vineyard. What's the world comin' till?"

Sir John's steward knew Bell well, and tried to soothe her by saying, "Don't bother yourself. If Mr. Barrie adhered to his resolution to leave the Established Church, no one would presume to hurry him out of the manse; at all events, he could have it until a successor was appointed."

But Bell was not in a sociable mood, and only said, "Sooner or later we maun flit." Then handing me a letter from Mr. Barrie, she said she would step into the kitchen until I got it read, and wait to see if there was any answer.

The letter confirmed the steward's news, and stated it would be a favour if I would reserve for him the first offer of Knowe Park, and that he would be home as soon as possible. After the steward had left I went to Bell, and told her that Mr. Barrie's letter was about Knowe Park, and asked if she would come with me and see if it would suit. This was rather a sudden following up of the affair, as Bell had convinced herself that Mr. Barrie would never leave the manse; and although she had generally ended her remarks on the subject with "Wherever could we gang?" she had not tried to answer the question. After a

little hesitation she said, "Knowe Park! that's where Mr. Taylor lived,—he had a grand apple tree—an 'Oslin pippin.' Is't aye yonder? It's a nice garden—a nice place to stop. I've noticed them buildin' a new house there, but I haena paid muckle attention till't. I wad like to see't. I'll be very glad to gang." And off we set.

It took a very few minutes to go. Bell was pleased with the outside of the house. "It was a nice house—fine big windows—faced the south—wad hae a grand view—the garden was bigger than she thocht, and in gude order. Is thae my plants?—they were thrivin'." With such snatches did Bell accompany her survey of the place before she went into the house. She criticized the inside more minutely, her standard being the manse. As she went from room to room she spoke of each, or rather thought aloud: "This is the kitchen—it's very nice—lichtsome—plenty o' room—it looks a nice grate, or I fancy ye'll ca' that a range. I never tried them, but they say they're handy. Presses—pantry. What's ben here?—washing-house—coal-house—awmrie¹—bed-room. Very nice; this will do fine. Noo, what about a study?" I suggested a bedroom, but she gave that

¹ The old Scotch name for the store-room containing dry food, such as flour, meal, etc.

only a partial approval ; the other rooms pleased her. When I showed the drawing-room, "Drawing-room !" said she ; "we hae nane at the manse, and Mrs. Barrie thinks we get on fine without it. We'll make this the study. But what about the outhouses ?"

This exercised Bell greatly. There was an old building in the north corner of the place, behind the bleaching-green, which I had left as it was ; it was a compound of stable, hay-loft, cart-shed, fruit-room, and potato-house, but required considerable repair. I was undecided whether to repair it or replace it by a building more in keeping with the house, but Bell protested against new outhouses. "Na, na ; nae mair expenses. Whitewash it, gi'e it a bit sort up, and it will fit us exactly." Then going to the hedge on the east, she said, "Wha's aught this park ?"

"It goes with the house," said I, "and is at Mr. Barrie's service."

Bell was delighted : she saw her way to bring "Daisy" and the hens. She became quite cheerful, and left me, saying as she parted, "It's the very place for us. I wadna say it's just up to the manse, but I'm thankfu' to ken of such a gude hame for them among kent folk. 'Better a wee bush than nae bield,'¹ as the saying is. But it's no' wee either ; it's just real nice."

¹ Shelter.

Mr. Barrie's return was awaited by the folks of Blinkbonny with mingled feelings, uppermost being anxiety about his worldly prospects. They were hardly prepared for the Disruption; and when they learned that Mr. Barrie had disjoined himself from the Church of Scotland, and consequently from his only source of income hitherto, they spoke of it as a serious matter, a very serious matter. It looked a rash step, and they felt more than they said, for the thought of his family and their future support pressed heavily on their hearts, and made his friends silent and solemn. He reached home on Thursday afternoon, and felt at a loss how to act. A few of his elders and friends had had little meetings on the subject, but these were unsatisfactory, because every one had nearly the same want of opinion. "They really did not know what to do;" "What could they do?" was all they could say, followed by a shake of the head and a puzzled look at one another. When they learned that Mr. Barrie had got back, they debated whether to wait for *him* to propose a meeting, or to go to him. The majority recommended that some of their number should call at the manse; but each wished his neighbour to go, and all were reluctant.

At length Mr. Taylor, a worthy elder and a sterling

man, said: "Friends, it will never do to back out that way. It's unkind to Mr. Barrie, and it's not creditable to ourselves. If three or four of you will join me," and looking round the company, he nodded to each as he named,—“say Mr. Smith, and Mr. Watson, and Mr. Brown, and Mr. Martin,—we'll go, and go soon.”

This met with universal approval, and a letter was sent to let Mr. Barrie know that some friends would wait on him about seven o'clock, if convenient. The reply was cordial and touching. It conveyed his heartfelt thanks for “the prompt kindness that provided for him so thoughtfully the earliest possible opportunity of explaining his position, and conferring with them on the important events of the past week,” and expressed the pleasure he would have in seeing all that could conveniently come, whether they approved of the step he had taken or not.

This letter removed the objection that many felt about going to the manse, and the company filled the dining-room. We expected to find Mr. Barrie dejected and downcast, and were surprised to find him not only cheerful, but more demonstrative in his heartiness than usual. How to introduce the matter had puzzled the deputation. This was not needed. Mr. Barrie very fully, but in moderate language,

stated the case as between the Free Church, the Government, and the remaining ministers of the Established Church, making it appear very different to me from what Sir John had made it. None of us ever saw him so animated as when he described the meeting of the Assembly from which, after the Protest and Declaration was made, hundreds of ministers walked out for conscience' sake; the perplexed look of the remaining members of Assembly; the awe-struck, solemn silence of the crowd as the line of reverend and grave men became longer and yet longer; the tumult of joy and sorrow as they crowded into Tanfield Hall; the reception they got from ministers of other denominations and the Christian public. As, however, these are fully described in the chronicles or annals of the times, I will not repeat them here, but would commend the subject to the attention of the student of history, and of the Scotch people, whichever side of the questions in dispute they may favour.

When he had laid the case before us, Mr. Barrie with great earnestness said, "I wish no one to join the Free Church, for"—here he hesitated, and looked as if debating something with himself, then resumed, "for—for—well, excuse me for using the term, for my sake. I wish every man to act only on distinct

conviction; and, if I know myself at all, I consider the right of private judgment in such matters such a holy thing, that I will respect those who, on conviction, differ from me on this matter, as much as I will those who go along with me in it. And now, Christian friends, I leave the matter in your hands. Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds."

A long, impressive silence followed Mr. Barrie's remarks. The deputation looked down, then up, then at one another. At length Mr. Taylor said: "Gentlemen, ye've heard Mr. Barrie—I can answer for myself—with great satisfaction. I've been reading the *Merqry*" (an Edinburgh newspaper called the *Caledonian Mercury*) "and the *Scotsman* on this matter—thanks to Mr. Smith for it. I've mair time for readin' than I once had, and I never was prouder o' my country than when I read that abune¹ four hunder ministers had courage enough, and faith enough, and principle enough, to leave the Kirk when they saw that her birthricht was wrested frae her by the sec'lar power, and their consciences scandalized by open defiance to the fundamental principles of the Christian economy. I needna tell you, gentlemen, that this leaving o' the Kirk means loss o' house and ha', and way o' livin', or stipend as it's

¹ Above.

ca'd; an' nae doubt there's a sair heart in mony a minister's breast, when he thinks o' his family and them that depends on him. And nae wonder, for in that respect it's a step in the dark,—a' the eerier that he has his nearest and dearest on his back, and a wrang step might finish them a'." Here Mr. Barrie winced, and emitted a sudden sound as if cold water had been poured on his back, which led Mr. Taylor to change his graphic style to one of practical application. "But no' to detain ye, gentlemen, I for one side wi' the Free Kirk, and will dae all in my power to back Mr. Barrie; and I hope and trust that the world 'll see that Scotland hasna lost the Covenanter's spirit yet, and will countenance what I may ca' the martyrs o' her third Reformation, that have gi'en up sae much for their Maister's sake, and never let them want a 'competent portion of the good things of this life.' 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' "

Others expressed themselves to the same effect. The oldest man in the party, George Brown, verging on eighty years of age, a "Nathanael," after a few words said, "Mr. Barrie, and Christian friends, I propose that we renew the Covenant." He made the same proposal in one of the early Assemblies, although

his weak voice, and the unexpectedness and inexpediency of the motion, prevented its being taken up.

It was resolved, on Mr. Barrie's suggestion, to call a meeting of the parishioners for Saturday afternoon, so that he might have an opportunity of explaining the "Disruption" fully to all who would meet with him, and to let the meeting be known in the parish, so that there might be a good attendance. Mr. Barrie also said that, as he considered it inexpedient to conduct the Sabbath service in the (he called it for the first time) "old" church, he would on Sabbath preach on the Annie Green, a nice grassy common, with its banks sloping upwards in a fairly-sized semi-circle, formed at a bend of the burn.

Before leaving the manse there was a service. The daylight had begun to fade; Mr. Barrie said that on that account we would sing what we all knew so well as not to need books, the 2d Paraphrase. As he read it, his voice faltered, and there was not a dry eye, or a throat without a lump in it, as it was sung. I give it in full below, although it must be familiar to nearly all of my readers, leaving them to judge of its singular applicability to the case:

"O God of Bethel! by whose hand
Thy people still are fed;
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led:

“Our vows, our pray’rs, we now present
Before thy throne of grace :
God of our fathers ! be the God
Of their succeeding race.

“Through each perplexing path of life
Our wand’ring footsteps guide ;
Give us each day our daily bread,
And raiment fit provide.

“O spread thy cov’ring wings around,
Till all our wand’rings cease,
And at our Father’s lov’d abode
Our souls arrive in peace.

“Such blessings from thy gracious hand
Our humble pray’rs implore ;
And thou shalt be our chosen God,
And portion evermore.”

The prayer was impressive and devout, fervent in its cry for light and strength and grace, simple and reverent.

After leaving the manse, the deputation walked slowly down the approach, old George Brown leaning on Mr. Taylor’s arm. When we reached the gate opening on the public road, George, who was in front, turned about, and when all had gathered round him, he said :

“Freends, I’m an auld man, the auldest o’ ye a’, and I thank God I’ve lived to see this day. I’ve lang mourned o’er the backslidings and defections o’ our times, but the Lord has made bare His holy arm. This is the day of His merciful visitation.

I'll say to you as Moses said to Joshua, 'Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed.' Dinna turn your back in the day of battle, like the sons of Ephraim; dinna abide by the bleatings of the sheep, like Reuben, or remain in ships, like Dan; abune a', dinna provoke the curse of Meroz for not coming to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Mind, when things werena as they should have been in the days o' Haggai, when men lived in their ceiled houses and let the house o' the Lord lie waste, that they sowed much but brocht in little, when neither their meat nor their drink nourished them, and even their vera claes werena warm. Their wages were putten into a bag wi' holes, and the Lord blew on what did grow; an' the drouth¹ spoilt their corn, an' wine, an' oil, an' men, an' cattle, an' a' the labour o' their hands; and they had blastin', an' mildew, an' hail. But frae the vera day, the four-and-twentieth day o' the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation o' the Lord's temple was laid—frae that vera day the Lord blessed them wi' plenty, an' scattered their faes, and made them as a signet—that

¹ Drought.

I take to be a finger-ring, aye in His sight. We hae gude reason to believe that the Lord's time to favour Zion has come. He's sitting like a refiner of silver, purifying the sons of Levi. Dinna rob Him in tithes and offerings, or He'll curse us wi' a curse; but oh, my freends, bring a' the tithes into the store-house,—the tithe o' pious hearts and godly zeal, an' prayer, an' brotherly love, an' charity, an' works o' faith, an' labours o' love, and worldly goods—a' the tithes; dinna keep back pairt o' the price, as ye would escape the fate o' Ananias and Sapphira. And if we a' dae our pairt, the Lord will prove true to His promise, an' open the windows o' heaven, and pour out a blessing till there's no room to receive it; and ours will be a delightful land—no more desolate and forsaken, but Hephzibah and Beulah, which means 'Delighted in,' and 'Married.'"

There was something of the old prophet in the good man, as he "lifted up his voice and testified." An interesting conversation followed, in which present duty was discussed, and each resolved to help the good cause. Before leaving the avenue, under the shade of the two limes which graced its entrance, without previous concert, but as if moved by a simultaneous influence, we uncovered and *looked to* old George. He quite understood the look, and feeling

the impulse, he engaged in prayer. His words had the rich unction of Christian experience; they lifted us up for the time until we felt as if inside the audience-chamber; he spoke as one speaks to a father and friend; it was not wrestling, it was more like Hezekiah's spreading out the letter of the Assyrian captain before the Lord in the temple. The close of the prayer for light and direction was fervent,—that every one of us may ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and do it with all our might, as good soldiers, and good servants, and good stewards. During the prayer was heard an occasional "amen," and there was a unanimous "amen" at its close, a very uncommon thing in such exercises in Scotland.

All had shaken hands with George, and were bidding good-bye to each other, when George said: "My freends, I'm gaun to ask a favour. I am a descendant of John Brown o' Priesthill, the carrier that was shot by Claverhouse. I hae his Bible and Psalm-book, and table and arm-chair. I wad like them to be used at the Annie Green on Sabbath by Mr. Barrie. They hae served the same purpose wi' Cameron and Peden and MacMillan in the covenantin' times, and I think the blood o' the martyrs is noo springing into the seed of the Church."

"Certainly," was the unanimous reply.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DISRUPTION AND BLINKBONNY.

“Long, long be my heart with such memories filled,
As the vase in which roses have once been distilled ;
You may break, you may ruin the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still.”

Thomas Moore.

NOTICE of the meeting that had been resolved on in the manse was given in the village and parish, chiefly by one telling another of it ; and so effectively was this done, that not a few who had given the day to the work of announcing it, felt disappointed at finding the news had preceded them.

Before the hour of meeting there was an unusual bustle in the streets, even for a Saturday, and the folks seemed all to have on their Sabbath-day clothes. As soon as the doors of the Beltane Hall, the public hall of Blinkbonny, were opened, a stream of people flowed into it, leaving the streets with scarcely a human being on them. Mr. Barrie entered very fully into

the history of the "Ten Years' Conflict." He was calm, self-possessed, and impressive. His references to the opposite side were marked by caution and Christian courtesy. When speaking of himself, he did so with great modesty; but he was high in his praise of the leaders of the movement, and of the determined attitude they maintained against all interference with the rights of the Christian people, for these alone were the true Christian Church. He pressed on the attention of all the duty of considering prayerfully the whole question; that they should not be influenced by any motive of mere human friendship or partiality or partisanship, but should bring the light of Scripture and conscience to bear on the path of duty, and walk in it and along it through good and bad report.

Before concluding, he thanked them all for their presence and manifest attention to his statement, and most touchingly for all their loving kindnesses to him: "As the minister of the Established Church of Blinkbonny, I must now say to you 'Farewell,' but I fervently add the prayer, 'The God of peace be with you.' By whatever distinctive name the Churches to which we shall henceforth belong may be called, may we all be members of the 'Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life,' and be found in Him here, complete in Him, and for

ever with Him yonder ; and as we have this hope in us, let us, as far as we are agreed, walk by the same rule, mind the same thing, and live at peace one with another."

He then told that he did not feel himself at liberty to occupy his old pulpit next day ; that as far as he knew, no one had been appointed to preach in it ; but that he would preach on the green by the burn-side at the usual hour in the forenoon, and at six o'clock in the evening. And he hoped his *former* (with a slight hesitation on his part, and a responsive sigh from the meeting) congregation would join in the service, and not be deterred by the fear that their presence would be construed as committing them to his views of the Church question. No such conclusion would be drawn. He would endeavour by God's help to preach the gospel. Let them come to hear *it*, not him. He also expressed a willingness to answer any questions, or give further explanations, or to confer with any who might prefer a private interview.

There was a long silence ; at length old George Brown rose and said : " My friends, it's Saturday nicht. Mr. Barrie's haen a sair week, an' doubtless mony o' ye hae come here this day upon account o' the occasion, when but for it ye wad hae been at hame at your proper duties ; and ye'll a' hae to get things weel

forrit¹ to get to ordinances the morn, so I think we'll be maist in the way o' our duty if we think weel aboot what we've heard, and meditate on it." Then looking round the audience, he asked, "What say ee, my friends?" As there was no reply, George looked to Mr. Barrie, and said, "I think, sir, ye should just conclude wi' praise and prayer; and if I may venture, I would say, gie oot the Forty-third Psalm an' the 3d verse. If we all sing the first four lines frae the *heart*, there will be a time o' refreshin' the morn.

"O send thy light forth and thy truth;
Let them be guides to me,
And bring me to thine holy hill,
Ev'n where thy dwellings be."

George was unmarried, and lived by himself. He was in the constant practice of making worship aloud and alone, reading each verse singly and then singing it. He, without waiting for Mr. Barrie "giein' out" the psalm, and as if quite forgetful of his presence, started to sing it to the tune called "Bedford," which the audience very heartily joined in. At the close of the first verse George held up one hand to secure silence, and repeated in singing tone on one key the next verse,—what my older readers will remember as "reading the line,"—which was then sung,

¹ Forward.

and so on to the end of the psalm. George was then proceeding to close his eyes for the prayer, after having made a slight bow to Mr. Barrie; but Mr. Barrie said, "Lead our devotions, if you please, Mr. Brown;" and the old man did this so as to make every heart thrill, and many strong men sob, and all the women cry. I was too much agitated to be able to carry away much. I am sorry to confess that the bit I can best recall is not the most impressive and solemn part, but rather a bit memorable for its quaintness as a specimen of the prayers of the earlier days of the old worthies: "That all who on the coming Sabbath assemble in the courts of Thy house may be delivered from formality, and legality, and carnality, purged from the leaven of malice and wickedness, and prepared according to the preparation of the sanctuary; . . . and that all Thy sent servants may be ministers of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man, and may be as the he-goats before the flocks."

Mr. Barrie pronounced the benediction, but the audience seemed unwilling to break up. At length old George stepped forward and shook Mr. Barrie's hand, wishing him "the blessing of him that was separated from his brethren." This proved contagious: every one shook hands with Mr. Barrie; even Bell, who had been trying to keep herself concealed during

the meeting, forgot her reserve, and although she broke down immediately after, and sobbed bitterly, she kept saying between the sobs, "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance;—the bush burning but not consumed;—the five loaves and the two small fishes."

As she went out, old George Brown was at her side, and everybody that could get near him was shaking his horny hands. He had overheard Bell saying, "It is good for us to be here." George knew Bell well, and taking her hand he said, "Yes, Bell, 'deed is't. Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadab." Then looking heavenwards: "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies—or, as it's in the 'margin, Mahanaim, the place where the angels met Jacob on his way back to Canaan, and Jacob said, 'This is God's host, and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.'"

One subject filled every heart on the way homewards. There was little said; they mused, and the fire burned.

Sabbath morning brought promise of a lovely summer day, and the promise was not belied. Gavin Sinclair, or "Guy," now the full beadle, sexton, bellman, and minister's man of Blinkbonny, was in a state

of great perplexity. Annie Gawdie, who cleaned the church, had told him that just as she was finished on Saturday night, everybody came "troopin' into the kirk to take awa' their books, an' spoke o' coming in soon to take away their cushions and stools; that they had made a bonnie mess o' her clean kirk, and when she quarrelled them for it, they said there was to be nae kirk in the morn, but Mr. Barrie was to preach on the Annie Green."

Guy had not gone to the meeting. He was a cautious man, and "didna think it became the like o' him, being a man in a public capacity, to meddle wi' kirk quarrels; for although Mr. Barrie might leave the kirk,—the mair's the pity, for we'll no' soon get ane like him, if ever,—there was the kirkyard. Ane didna ken how soon they might hae to break the gr'und for some death or anither in the parish. He didna like to gi'e offence to ony side—he had to look till his bread," etc.

Guy's difficulty was whether to ring the church bell or not. He always rung it at ten o'clock, and would do that as usual,—“That wasna the bell for gaun to the kirk—it was just to let folk ken the richt time to set their clocks by.” His “swither” was about the ringing of the bell for calling the folk to the kirk at the usual time. If, as he learned, there

“was to be no sermon in the kirk, what for should he ring the bell? Then, on the ither hand, what business had he to stop the ringing o’ the bell without orders? and wha was to direct him? Would he ask Mr. Barrie, or the schoolmaster, who was session-clerk? He never did that before, and it would look officious.” So he resolved to go on as usual. He rang the bell at ten o’clock, and sauntered, as was his wont, to the manse to ask if there were any orders for him, such as to make preparations for a baptism; but instead of going into the kitchen, he hovered about the door until Bell observed him. Bell was full of activity to get all ready that she might go to the Annie Green, and had forgotten about Guy’s regular call. Both were perplexed. Guy muttered, he wondered if there “would be ony orders for him the day—she might ask the minister—if—if he—if he had ony—ony special—” Then a happy idea seemed to strike him, and he got out—“onything to get ready before bell-time?”

Bell took in the situation at once, but had not time to master it. Generally the pulpit Bible and Psalm-book were put on the parlour table on Sabbath mornings, ready for Guy, and Bell got instructions about anything specially wanted. They were not on the table, but in the study, which Bell never entered

before church time. She asked Mrs. Barrie, who answered that there could be nothing. Bell lingered, and said in a distant tone, "I think, mem, that Guy disna ken whether to ring the bell at kirk-time or no'."

Mrs. Barrie hesitated a little whether to disturb Mr. Barrie or not, then said, "Tell Guy to please himself; that Mr. Barrie left no orders, and I cannot disturb him at present, but will ask him at half-past eleven and let Guy know what he says."

At half-past eleven, as usual, Mrs. Barrie tapped at the study door, and said, "Now, my dear." Mr. Barrie almost immediately came out, and she asked him about the bell, lifting up at the same time the simple Geneva pulpit gown worn by Presbyterian ministers, to help him on with it. Mr. Barrie did not turn and stoop a little as usual to get the robe of office put on, but kept saying,

"Bell—ring the bell—I had not thought of that. What do you think, Mary?"

Mrs. Barrie said she had told Guy to do as he thought fit, unless he got other instructions,—“the best thing that could have been done in the circumstances.”

Guy did ring the bell as usual, and got a neighbour to tell any who came that the service was to be on

the Annie Green. The herald, however, had little to do. A few slipped quietly into the church for their pew Bibles; some paid their weekly visit to the graves of their loved ones around the church; but the stream was towards the Annie Green. About a dozen male figures stood around the church door when the bell ceased; the stream had passed; not a straggler was in the churchyard. After a general conversation they broke up; some went to the Annie Green, others moodily and wonderingly homewards.

I had arranged with George Brown to get his ancestor's chair, table, and books brought to my place on Saturday evening, and persuaded him to stay with me till Monday. I had also told Mr. Barrie about them. The incident pleased him, and touched him not a little. All forms, chairs, and available seats were brought by willing hands to the Annie Green early in the forenoon. The Priesthill relics were placed nearest the burn, the forms and chairs in front, and the dry grassy braes of the burn, which at the place had the form of an irregular half-circle sloping gently upwards, afforded comfortable room for a large congregation.

Long before the hour of meeting, the country folks began to come in, going from "strength to strength." Many lingered about the old church and churchyard,

and on the road or sward leading to the place of meeting. Mr. Barrie left the manse in time to walk leisurely. His plain black Geneva gown, his handsome figure, his

“Aspect manly, grave, and sage.
As on king’s errand come,”

gave solemnity to the scene. Mrs. Barrie leant on his arm. Each led one of the younger children by the hand, whilst Bell followed with the two older ones. As soon as they entered the avenue, the word, “There he is—there they are,” passed from lip to lip; and when they came to the public road, and as they walked along it, the people stepped aside and stood hat in hand till they had passed, then falling in behind, formed an irregular procession to the green. Those who had already gathered there all rose up and uncovered as Mr. Barrie appeared. When the audience had got seated or settled, Mr. Barrie opened the service by reading the 125th Psalm, which he did in a firm, clear voice. The braes of the burn, the glen, the neighbouring woods, and for a considerable distance the country around, heard the sound of grave, sweet melody, rising in volume and intensity as it proceeded. The tune was “St. Andrew’s,” an old favourite, and said by tradition to be associated in early Scottish Reformation times with the same words :

“They in the Lord that firmly trust
Shall be like Sion hill,
Which at no time can be remov’d,
But standeth ever still.

“As round about Jerusalem
The mountains stand alway,
The Lord his folk doth compass so,
From henceforth and for aye.”

All the services were impressive, but I will not attempt to detail them. The text was, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” The sermon was, in the opinion of all, the best sermon they had ever heard from him. George Brown was delighted with it—characterized it as “a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined;” and all the more so that Mr. Barrie’s practice had hitherto been to have his carefully prepared manuscript before him when preaching, and to use it occasionally, while on this occasion all that he had was the open Priesthill Bible. The only objection that George ever had to Mr. Barrie was that he used “the paper;” read sermons were, according to George, neither good for minister nor people. To-day there was nothing to mar George’s enjoyment of the worship. The concluding paraphrase was sung with even more enthusiasm. It was the 48th Paraphrase, verses 6–9; the tune was “Montrose,” sometimes called “the burghers’ rant.” I give it in full, as I did the one sung in the manse,

and my readers can imagine the vigour with which such words were sung in such a meeting at such a crisis :—

“ Who then can e’er divide us more
From Jesus and his love,
Or break the sacred chain that binds
The earth to heav’n above ?

“ Let troubles rise, and terrors frown,
And days of darkness fall ;
Through him all dangers we’ll defy,
And more than conquer all.

“ Nor death nor life, nor earth nor hell,
Nor time’s destroying sway,
Can e’er efface us from his heart,
Or make his love decay.

“ Each future period that will bless,
As it has bless’d the past ;
He lov’d us from the first of time,
He loves us to the last.”

Not the least surprising of the forenoon’s incidents was the amount of the collection. It had been debated whether there should be any made on the occasion, but Mr. Taylor was most determined to have one. “ Bring an offering with you,” said he, “ is as plain a command as, Come into His courts ;” and he undertook to provide and to stand at “ *the plates*,” which were placed just inside the gate of the Annie Green. The result surprised Mr. Taylor. I have since learned that many borrowed of their neighbours, and that the amount put in as the congregation retired was

larger than that made as they entered. The sum was £29, 13s. 3d.

George, of course, took dinner with us, and a few country friends joined who wished to be at the evening service. I had been struck with the worn appearance of the knees of George's clothes compared with the fresh "nap" on the other parts; but I observed that, when asking a blessing before meat, and returning thanks after it, he rubbed his hands firmly over his knees, moving his body backwards and forwards, and speaking louder as he began the forward motion. His exercises were longer than are usual in such cases, and I found on further acquaintance with him that they were stereotyped, generally containing, "May we go up through the wilderness of this world, leaning on the staff of Him who is the beloved of our souls. May we sit under His shadow with great delight, and find His fruit sweet unto our taste. Bless and sanctify all Thy ways and dealings towards us, etc. When remarking on the sermon, he also rubbed his knees and discoursed rather than conversed about it.

The evening service was better attended than the forenoon one. The burst of music was overpowering as the 46th Psalm was being sung:—

"God is our refuge and our strength,
In straits a present aid," etc.

The sermon was from these words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." It was a grand sermon, suitable for all times. At the close, in a few moderately worded sentences, Mr. Barrie referred to the special circumstances under which they had met, and stated that they would meet in the same place next Sabbath, the first Sabbath of June, the anniversary of the battle of Drumclog; and he waxed eloquent as he held up John Brown of Priesthill's Bible, and referred to the other relics before him, until the audience felt the martyr spirit, and were sorry that he concluded so soon.

I have already referred to the singing of the day, and will only add that the singing of the concluding psalm — cxxii., verses 6–9, to the tune of "St. Paul's"—

"Pray that Jerusalem may have
Peace and felicity;
Let them that love thee and thy peace
Have still prosperity"—

was grand. The evening's collection made the day's offering amount altogether to over £38. I have dwelt at more length than I intended on this subject, but it was a great event for a little place. Very possibly I have overdrawn the picture; but had you mingled with the companies of the worshippers as

they walked homewards, you would have heard Mr. Barrie's oldest hearers say he never preached like that in his life before, and strangers that they had no idea that Mr. Barrie could preach like that,—“he was a man of immense ability,—the best sermon they had ever heard,—it's a wonder he had been so long in Blink bonny.”

The attendance at the Annie Green on the first Sabbath of June was as large as on the previous Sabbath, and the services had special reference to the struggles of the Covenanters and the battle of Drumclog. Old George Brown was highly satisfied. “I have often,” said he, “spoken to Mr. Barrie about saying ower little about thae Cath'lics, and that he should raise his testimony against Prelacy and Popery ; but he aye said that even if he was speakin' to Cath'lics, he wad preach the plain gospel, an' no scare them away by denouncin' baith them an' their system, or settin' them against the truth by no' speakin' it in love ; and for his ain people, it would ‘minister questions rather than godly edifying,’ as he thocht that runnin' doon the Cath'lics was apt to make folk think because they werena Cath'lics that they were a' richt, an' beget spiritual pride. An' he wasna far wrang. But his subject led him *on* the day, and I was uncommon pleased to hear him speak as he did o' the

auld worthies, Knox and Melville, and Cameron an' Peden, and my forbear Brown, an' let this backslidin', worldly-minded generation ken hoo far behint their ancestors they were in courage an' piety, in thocht, word, an' deed."

There was a congregation of the United Secession, now the United Presbyterian, Church in Blinkbonny, and Mr. Morrison, the minister, and his session had generously offered to accommodate the Free Church, as far as lay in their power, with the use of their church, as the largest hall in the village was too small for the congregation. Mr. Morrison was a diligent student, conscientious and minute in his preparations for the pulpit: he wrote these carefully out, and spent the last two days of the week in committing them to memory. He was an estimable man, an excellent scholar, had been a great reader, and was well versed in general science; but he had an affluence of words and a Johnsonian style of composition that injured him as a preacher. His matter was good, sound, unexceptionable, but his manner of conveying it was verbose, often a mere recasting of the grand old English of the Bible into a laboured and profuse style of expression. He seldom used the terse old Saxon words if he could get a word of grander sound derived from another language, but used "plenitude"

instead of "fulness," "capacitate" for "fit," and "salubrious" for "healthy." His voice was good, but the long, involved sentences made it appear monotonous, and justified the critique of old Robert Gunn: "Vera gude matter, nae doubt, but tedious, a wee tedious. He has lang 'heids,'¹ an' disna aye gi'e them ower again in the same words, which fickles² the young folk that have to tell the 'heids an' particulars' when they gang hame; for if, as is gey an' often the case, the first 'heid' is, 'The persons mentioned in the text,' we're almost sure to hear when he's done with it, 'Having thus considered, in the first place, the individuals to whom reference is made in the deeply interesting and highly instructive passage which I have selected as the subject of this morning's exposition,' which is baith confusin' an' tedious."

The services in the "Meetin'-house," the local name of the Secession Church, occupied without interval fully three hours, and included a lecture and a sermon of at least an hour each. In order to suit the Free Church, these were begun at ten o'clock, and ours at one. This put Mr. Morrison to the serious difficulty of condensing his services. For the first two Sabbaths he did not manage this. As he had *proposed* that the Free Church should meet at

¹ Divisions of a sermon.

² Puzzles.

one o'clock, he was remonstrated with very plainly by some of his people. Robert Gunn, a forward "body," had suggested the means: "Just dicht [sift] yer corn better, and leave less chaff in't."

On the third Sabbath he got through in about two hours and a half, and kept thereafter rather within that limit, although not without having often to say, "Did time permit, I would have proceeded," etc., or, "The brief space of time at my disposal prevents me from entering on the full illustration of my next head, but I may say in a word—." That was an ominous expression, and the result often proved it an inconsistent one, as the "word," or "one word more," seldom occupied less than fifteen minutes. "Lastly, and very briefly," was another term contradicted by the sequel.

The shorter service was a comfortable change for those whose uneasy task it was to keep their children "behaving themselves" in the church. James Spence, whose regular remark to his neighbours on their road home had been, "He said a great deal, really he said a very great deal," gave as his opinion that "he really thocht that there was less skailt noo that the kirk skailed sooner,¹ for even yet there was a great deal said that we couldna carry home, and mair that

¹ "There was less spilt now that the church was dismissed sooner."

we didna carry oot; and wi' the bairns no' bein' sae fashious through no' bein' sae lang in, we could attend better."

The Free Church services in the Meeting-house were well attended. Many of the Seceders joined in them, and confessed with shame that their sectarian bitterness towards the principle of a church establishment had extended to its ministers, on whom they had looked uncharitably as "Samaritans," with whom they could have no dealings, and they were surprised to find Mr. Barrie so excellent. Maggie Gunn told her father "that yon minister preached as well as Mr. Morrison, only far better." Mr. Barrie became a favourite with them; although, to the honour of all parties be it told, that no one left the Secession to join the Free Church on that account. Between Mr. Morrison and himself, as well as between the office-bearers and congregations, there existed the most cordial relationships, and the interchange of pleasant communion and fellowship. I look back with so much delight to the sympathy and help we got in the beginning of our way from our Secession friends, that I fear I have been, to use Robert Gunn's phrase, "a wee tedious."

Mr. Walker of Middlemoor was Mr. Barrie's successor in the parish church of Blinkbonny. In

making application to Sir John M'Lelland for the living, he was very honest in telling his motives, viz. that the stipend was larger, and the manse and glebe were better; and his family were growing up, and he would like to get settled in a place where he could get openings for the older ones, schooling for the younger ones, and where they could all come home at night; and he would be very much obliged to Sir John if he would present him to Blinkbonny. And he was presented and inducted in due form and time.

He was a kind-hearted, stout, canny man, of moderate abilities as a scholar and preacher. His parish of Middlemoor was a small one, in a pastoral and moorland district, thinly peopled. It had a large glebe of indifferent land, which he cultivated diligently to eke out his small stipend. He was quite as good at farming as preaching, and had, on Mr. Barrie's suggestion, been Bell's adviser in the purchase or sale of cows, sheep, or pigs. Even on the subject of poultry he was at home, as he made his son keep a "hen journal," partly as a lesson in book-keeping, and partly as a practical application of the inspired proverb, which was often in his mouth, "Be diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds."

He was a frequent visitor at Mr. Barrie's, an

occasional "assistant" at the October communion services, and a regular member of the "thanksgiving" dinner-party at the manse on the Monday thereafter. He was a man of peace, and took little interest in the Voluntary, Disruption, or other controversies; and when these formed the subject of after-dinner discussion, he left the dining-room, and slowly betook himself to the kitchen for a smoke, for he was an inveterate smoker.

He looked relieved as he entered the kitchen; said, "Well, Bell;" dropt heavily into the arm-chair which stood at the fireside (the arms of which were barely wide enough to admit him, but they yielded with a creak, and he got in, but had to press them firmly down before he got out); took out his pipe—generally a short black one; knocked out the dottle¹ on the hob-plate; tried if it would draw, and if not, cleared the bowl with the point of his knife, and if that failed, asked Bell for a stalk of lavender. When the pipe was cleared to his mind, he slowly cut some thin slices from a roll of twist tobacco, rubbed the fragments between his hands, filled his pipe, put on the "dottle," and applied the "spunk," from which Bell had broken off the sulphur tip. All these operations and details were done with very great deliberation and in grave

¹ The dry, crisp remains of a former smoke.

silence, with the exception of asking the lavender stalk, which was only resorted to after the knife and the repeated blowings from the bowl and shank ends of the pipe had failed; and after it was fairly lighted and going well, he began an intermittent, congenial crack.

Tobacco smoke Bell could not endure. No other person would have been permitted to pollute her kitchen with it, and as a general rule she got Mr. Walker to combine his inspection of the garden and glebe with "enjoyin' his smoke;" but as this dinner-day came round she had to submit, so she provided against it by removing the hams and things of that sort, that they might not be "scomfished;" and she set herself to enjoy the leisurely preparations, and to respect the silence with which they were conducted, as the after-crack was sure to be quite to her mind.

At the last October dinner, after a few soothing whiffs, Mr. Walker began the colloquy with, "Bell, I'm glad to get away from these discussions about the Kirk; I cannot bear them. I like better to talk about live stock. How are yours?"

Bell entered heartily into an account of her year's doings, and Mr. Walker listened approvingly, and in return told about his crops and herds, and what the "mairt" (the animal which had been killed and salted

for winter use) had weighed, and how the hens, bees, etc. had done—alternately speaking and smoking. I cannot give the interview in detail, but both agreed they had had a grand crack—better than any kirk quarrels.

It was from the following story, which Mr. Walker then told, that Bell had first heard of the Church “question;” but his way of putting it was so conclusive to Bell, that she thought no more about it until the matter of the potatoes brought it home to herself.

A lady from Leith had come to reside in Middlemoor, and had said to the farmer of Hillend, who had accosted her with, “Weel, mem, hoo d’ye like to bide in this moorland country?”

“Very much indeed, it’s delightful! If I had only my own doctor and my own minister, I would stay here all the year through; but you know your country doctors are not quite—quite—well—well enough in their way, but not *quite* like the town doctors; and the ministers are *very* nice—” This she said in a hesitating undertone, not expressive of hearty concurrence, and ended in a firmer voice, “but not like my own.”

“’Deed, mem,” said Hillend, “gi’e us farmers a gude miller an’ a gude smith, an’ we can do weel enough wi’ any ministers or doctors that likes to come.”

"That wasna bad for Hillend," said Bell.

"Well, Bell," said Mr. Walker, "I thought it rather hard on the ministers when I first heard the story, but—" And here he gave his views of the Non-Intrusionists with, for him, unusual fervour, and added, "Now I quite agree with Hillend, that congregations should accept, and welcome, and honour the ministers who are appointed over them."

"That's without a doubt," said Bell; "and esteem them very highly for their work's sake."

The news of Mr. Walker's appointment to Blinkbonny was received with first a stare, then a shrug of the shoulders, then a pretty general feeling that "they might have had worse." He was certainly not a shining light, but he was a nice man, had a large family, and it would be a good change for them. And although the local poetaster circulated a sorry effusion on the subject, in which he, without acknowledgment, stole from Cowper's *Needless Alarm*,—

"A mutton statelier than the rest,"—

and—

"His loving mate and true,
But more discreet than he, a *Moorland* ewe,"—

changing the original "Cambrian" to "Moorland," it did not take, and Blinkbonny on its personal and

social and "soft" side was ready to "entertain" Mr. Walker.

He carried the news of his own appointment to the manse, and although it surprised Mr. Barrie at the moment, he heartily wished him every success and comfort, and added that he would find the manse at his service by the time he was inducted. Mr. Walker assured Mr. Barrie that there was no hurry, as "he did not see that they could possibly come in until after the harvest was past at Middlemoor."

When Bell heard that Mr. Walker was coming to Blinkbonny, she forgot her usual good manners. "Mr. Walker!—Walker o' Middlemoor!—fat Walker's gotten the kirk, has he? He's a slow coach—pity the folk that gangs to hear him; but 'deed they'll no' mony gang. He minds me o' Cauldwell's speech at the cattle show. After Sir John palavered away about the grand stock, and praised Cauldwell for gettin' sae money prizes, the decent man just said, 'Sir John and gentlemen, thank ye a' kindly. I'm nae hand o' makin' a speech. I may be a man among sheep, but I'm a sheep among men.'" And Bell showed how changeable human affections are; for although Mr. Walker and she had been hand-and-glove friends, she summed up with, "Mr. Walker will never fill Mr. Barrie's shoon [shoes]. I never could

thole¹ him an' his filthy tobacco smoke. Ugh! ma puir kitchen will sune be in a bonny mess; an' I dinna ken what to think about the things in the garden an' outhouses that are *ours*, for, as Mrs. Walker ance said to me, her motto was, 'Count like Jews and 'gree like brithers.'"

But when the settling up came, Bell found Mrs. Walker "easy dealt wi',"—not only satisfied with her valuation, but very complimentary as to the state in which everything was left, and very agreeable—very.

¹ Endure.

CHAPTER VII.

OUT OF THE OLD HOME AND INTO THE NEW.

‘Confide ye aye in Providence, for Providence is kind,
An’ bear ye a’ life’s changes wi’ a calm an’ tranquil mind ;
Though press’d an’ hemm’d on every side, ha’e faith an’ ye’ll
win through;
For ilka blade o’ grass keeps its ain drap o’ dew.”

James Ballantine.

MR. BARRIE had written to Sir John M’Lelland, thanking him for his uniform kindness, and saying that he had disjoined himself from the Established Church. He also wrote to the clerk of his presbytery to the same effect, adding that he would leave the manse as soon as he could.

A short time sufficed to put Knowe Park into habitable order. Whenever this was known, Mr. Barrie was cumbered by proffers of help from the farmers in the parish. He could have had fifty carts to remove his furniture for one that he required ; and acts or offers of considerate attention were so showered on him that he was embarrassed by them.

At length the day came for "flitting." It was a fine morning in the middle of summer,—everything was looking its best. The manse in itself was a charming place. To Mr. and Mrs. Barrie and their children it had been a happy home, and in their inmost hearts it was hallowed by many tender associations; and the church was endeared to Mr. Barrie as he recalled the pleasant meetings therein with his beloved flock. The parting was a bitter ordeal, trying to flesh and blood, and as such they felt it very keenly.

At the hour for family worship, the men who were taking down the furniture and making it ready for being carted were asked to come to the "books;" and they told afterwards that in singing the 23d Psalm their voices quivered, and that there was a lump in their throat as the 138th Psalm was read as the "*ordinary*" for the morning, for the circumstances seemed to give additional meaning to such parts of it as—"strengthenedst me with strength in my soul," "though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me," "the Lord will perfect that which concerneth me," "forsake not the works of Thine own hands."

As soon as the first cart was laden and off, Bell went to Knowe Park to get things put rightly in and up. The three elder children had resolved to flit their own belongings. James took his small barrow,

filled with a confused load of skates, books, etc. Mary carried her little chair, Black Tam the negro doll, and some books and toys; Lewie his little chair, a toy horse, and a whip. They had reached the post office (which stood a little back from the main street), and were resting on the broad open pavement in front of it, James sitting on his barrow, the others in their chairs.

Dr. Guthrie, who had been spending a day or two in the neighbourhood, was calling at the post office. Soon, as his quick eye rested on the singular group, his face became radiant with such a smile as *he* could give, and which the children returned very frankly. He went close to them, stooped down and patted Mary's cheek, got his hand under her chin and stroked it playfully, all the while looking kindly in her face; then glancing at her lap, he said:

"What's the name of that fine doll, my wee pet? is it Sambo, or Pompey, or what?"

"That's black Tam," said Mary. "It was Nellie's doll, and I'm taking it to our new house."

"Nellie's, was it? And is Nellie too old for dolls now, and has she given it to you? He looks as if he had seen better days."

"Oh! please, sir, Nellie's dead," said Mary, looking towards the churchyard; "she's buried over there."

“But Bell and mamma say that Nellie’s in heaven,” said Lewie very decidedly.

The suddenness and beauty of Lewie’s answer strongly affected Dr. Guthrie. He took out his snuff-box and took a moderate pinch, then clapped Lewie’s head, and said :

“Yes, my wee man, you’re right ; Nellie’s in heaven. But what’s your name ?”

James now took speech in hand : “My name’s James Barrie, and this is Mary, and this is Lewie. We’re flitting from the manse over yonder ;” and he pointed in the same direction as Mary had looked. But Dr. Guthrie, thus suddenly brought into contact with this stern reality of the Disruption, had again to apply to his snuff-box, and was in the act of taking it out of his pocket when Sir John M’Lelland drove up to the post office and alighted. Dr. Guthrie and he knew one another as members of Assembly, and they shook hands cordially, Sir John expressing surprise at seeing the doctor there.

“Sir John,” said the doctor, “excuse me,”—and he dried the tear that was coursing down his cheek,—“do you know these children ?”

Sir John had not observed the group, but he looked at them long enough to admit of Dr. Guthrie pulling out his box, taking one good snuff, and getting another ready for despatch in his fingers.

"Oh, yes," said Sir John, "they are Mr. Barrie's children;" then looking at James: "How are mamma and papa keeping?"

The children had risen, and the boys had taken off their caps when Sir John appeared. In answer to the question James said: "They're quite well, thank you, sir; we're all going to our new house to-day; *we're* helping to flit."

Dr. Guthrie took his reserve snuff, looked first at Sir John, then at the children, and swinging his hand so that it pointed to the children, then to the manse, and resting it now towards them and again towards it, he recited with much feeling, for he seemed deeply moved:

"From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
This makes her loved at home, revered abroad;
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
An honest man's the noblest work of God."

By this time several of the villagers were attracted by the scene, and they scarcely could repress the cheer that was struggling for vent in their throats. Respect for Sir John, however, kept it down until he drove away, when a right hearty greeting was given to Dr. Guthrie, in whose eyes the tear still trembled, and many pressed forward to grasp his hand,—none more warmly than Kennedy the tailor, who, producing his snuff-box, said:

“Ye’ll excuse me, sir; I dinna ken ye, but—ye’ll excuse me, sir—but would ye do me the honour of takin’ a snuff out of my box?”

“Certainly, my good friend,” said the doctor; “and we’ll giff-gaff,” handing his box to the tailor, and helping himself out of Kennedy’s dimpled, black-looking, oval-shaped tin box.

The tailor took a pinch, said it was “prime snuff,” and added: “Burns is a great poet, and that was a grand verse you gied us the noo, and the occasion’s worthy o’t. Mr. Barrie’s an honest man, but he’s far mair, he’s a patriot-martyr.”

The last cartload had left the manse; there was nothing for Mr. and Mrs. Barrie to do but lock the door and follow. They paid a farewell visit to each room. Their footsteps sounded harshly through the house, now empty and dreary, still they were loath to leave. When they were fairly outside of the front door they lingered on its step; then Mr. Barrie, with a quick “This will never do,” locked the door and withdrew the key.

They were bracing themselves for their trying walk past the church, past the churchyard, and through the village, when a noise, a familiar noise, yet with an eerie wail in it, made them both start. It came from old Tibby the cat—Nellie’s Tibby. Bell had

carried her to Knowe Park in a basket as carefully as if she had been Nellie herself, and had shut her up in a room. When the children came, James and Mary had got strict orders to watch her; but Tibby had beaten them all and got off, and home and into some quiet corner of the manse, whence, when the door was locked, she crept out, uttering her wailing protest.

“Poor Tibby,” said Mrs. Barrie, “we must take you with us.”

When the door was re-opened, Tibby was easily caught. She had evidently felt convinced, after a bewildered ramble through the empty house, that there was some reason for her late transportation and imprisonment.

This little incident re-opened the floodgates of tender memories, and forced tears from Mrs. Barrie’s eyes, although by that time the fountain had been largely drawn upon. She felt thankful to have something else than herself to think of; and Tibby’s presence in her arm, tucked cosily into the corner of her shawl, served to divide her attention, and supplied sufficient amount of occupation to make the walk less trying to her. She leaned heavily on Mr. Barrie’s arm, partly from weariness, partly from excitement.

When they reached Knowe Park, Bell had tea set for

them in the parlour; and the children, having already made a complete round of the whole premises, gave at the tea-table cheering proofs that they had not lost their appetites, as well as curious details of what they had discovered in their ramblings over their new home.

Bell had got the bedrooms into wonderful order for their accommodation at night, and this deprived kind neighbours of the pleasure they would have had in "putting up" for a few nights all or any of the family. Within a few days they all felt quite at home, and the additional work entailed by making the manse things go as far as they could, kept them so busy that they were surprised at their having got over the flitting, and especially the "*leaving*" of the manse, so soon and so quietly.

I did not think it possible that Bell could have wrought harder than I had always known her to do; but she did, and soon Knowe Park was as much to her, in as far as the garden and live stock were concerned, as the old homestead had been. And although Guy the beadle offered to bring out of the manse garden whatever she wished, Bell had enough and to spare, and told Guy to use for himself what he liked, and after that only to sell what was ripe or "near spoiling."

True to his trust, Guy brought her a fair sum of

money obtained in this way, which she handed to Mr. Barrie, not Mrs. Barrie as usual, telling him how it had come. Mr. Barrie was greatly pleased with Guy and Bell, and thanked them warmly; but to Bell's astonishment he handed her back the money, and said: "Give it to the poor, Bell, and oh! let us be thankful we have something to give away."

This was several steps in advance of Bell's notions of what was called for, and she spoke to Mrs. Barrie about it. Mrs. Barrie was well aware that she would need to be very economical, but Mr. Barrie's "thankful to have something to give away" was so like himself, and the money had come so unexpectedly, that she said:

"Certainly, Bell, we'll carry out Mr. Barrie's wishes; and when something has thus come that we *can* give, let us be thankful to get the more blessedness, for it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Bell could not quite go in with this doctrine. She thought for a little, and then said hesitatingly:

"Just so, mem; but you'll surely no' object to me selling whatever's to spare at Knowe Park, mem, will ye? I think less o' what comes frae the auld manse; an' I'm aye gaun to ca't that, an' this house is to be the manse. No' the new manse, but *the manse—the manse.*"

“Do as you have always done, Bell; no directions I could give would serve you so well as your own good sense. And I have been so unsettled by the events of the past two months that I hardly know my own mind; but one thing I do know, and feel—” here Mrs. Barrie’s eyes filled, and she finished the sentence with a trembling voice, “and that is, that you have been a sister and a mother to us all,—a Deborah and a Ruth, a Martha and a Dorcas put together. May God reward you.”

This was nearly too much for Bell, but the necessity of getting on and getting through was pressing her strongly. She accordingly braced herself up, and said in a cheerful tone:

“Mrs. Barrie, I’ve gotten ower a’ my fears an’ cares o’ a worldly kind about this kirk business, an’ I’m humbled to think that I spoke to you an’ the minister an’ ithers as I did, an’ that I didna join the noble army till after the battle was won; but noo,” said she with great solemnity, “I pray that I may mak’ up for my faintin’ in the day o’ adversity by settin’ my face like a flint to my wark,” and here she lowered her tone. “But I’m forgettin’ mysel’, an’ we maun a’ set the stout heart to the stey [steep] brae, an’ gather up the loins o’ our minds and heads and hands, and no’ turn back like Lot’s wife. We’re gaun to dae fine

here: the range is very licht on the coals; an' the hens are takin' to the place, an' layin' weel; an' Daisy's up to her knees in clover," and here Bell put on her blithest look, "an' I never saw either Mr. Barrie or you lookin' better. And we maunna let it be said that we're 'unsettled,' when in every sense o' the word we're settled, and weel settled,—we couldna be better,—we're just real weel set."

Bell's hearty speech put Mrs. Barrie into good spirits. She left the kitchen with a smile on her lip and a warm thought in her heart, which found expression as she walked through the lobby in "Thank God for Bell!"

Bell was contentedly happy because she was constantly busy, and her schemes prospered. From the day Mr. Barrie had hinted at the possibility of their leaving the manse, she set herself to contrive if by any means she could be more than ever one of the bread-winners, and her first attempt was on the hens. Some one had told her about the increased yield of eggs which Sir John's henwife had got by some changes she had made in the food and treatment of her poultry. Bell adopted the new system, and improved on it. She succeeded far beyond her expectations, and with a happy face told me of her luck one afternoon when she was ordering some peppercorns

and other spices, with which to experiment still further on a notion of her own.

“I’ve been trying different plans wi’ my hens. I first gied them dry grain, and they did but middlin’; then I gied them rough meal, an’ they did better; syne I boiled their meat, an’ put a ‘curn’¹ o’ spice in’t, an’ they did splendid—far mair than paid for the extra meat; then I got a cracknel frae the candle-maker (ane o’ yon dark, cheese-lookin’ things that they make out o’ the rinds o’ fat, an’ skins, an’ sic like that comes out o’ their tallow), and boiled a bit o’ it among their meat, and the result was extraordinary; they just laid on an’ on till they actually reduced themselves to fair skeletons. I was fair affronted to see them about the place, an’ I had to gi’e them a rest an’ change their victuals. *Now* I try to mix their meat so as to get them baith to lay weel an’ to be size for the table. But ye’ll hae seen what grand eggs I’ve been sending to yoursel’, an’ how mony mair than before?”

I knew that to be the case, and said so. Bell continued:

“But besides that, early in the spring I got some settings o’ eggs that they say are a grand kind, and the birds are a gude size a’ready. I got them from

¹ A small quantity.

Dan Corbet, an' so I wadna like to say very muckle about them, for Dan's no' aye to lippen¹ to. 'Deed, since we've come to live nearer him, I'm no sae high about them, for he has a vermin o' game-cocks about him, and they whiles cross the north park and fecht wi' mine—they're a fair torment."

Dan Corbet was a "queer mixture." He was a native of Blinkbonny, but had been out of the parish for several years; report said he had been a smuggler on the west coast of Scotland. He returned to his native parish about the year 1820, with scars on his face, and without one of his eyes, which gave him a sinister look. For some years he had been night-watchman in the churchyard, as the outrageous custom of violating the sanctity of the grave in order to procure subjects for surgical demonstration and actual use in teaching anatomy had sent a thrill of horror over Scotland, and had led to the systematic watching of churchyards by at least two individuals every night. Dan was the paid regular watchman, and at least one or more respectable householders by turns watched with him. Dan's reckless character fitted him for the dreary post; and although none of those who watched with him respected him, they found that he was always wakeful, and, in the matter in hand, trustworthy.

¹ Trust.

When the night watching was given up, Dan maintained himself by doing on a larger scale the odd sorts of jobs which he had sometimes taken in hand in order to add to his salary as watchman, or "dummie doctor," as he was called. My older readers will remember with what feelings of indignation the resurrectionists or dummie doctors (for these were the names given to the violators of the graves) were spoken of, and that after their disappearance the odious name, "dummie doctor," sometimes stuck to the watchman.

Dan acted amongst the surrounding farmers as butcher, mole-catcher, rat-catcher, and, in a rough way, as a veterinary surgeon; was employed as extra hand at sheep-shearings, corn-threshings, etc. He was a regular attender of local cattle markets, fairs, races, and games; a good and keen fisher, and strongly suspected of being a poacher, but never convicted. He was a wiry, spare, athletic man of about 5 feet 11 inches high, with a weatherbeaten countenance, thin grizzled hair, and a long stride. He lived in a cottage, divided by a single park-breadth from Knowe Park, and kept a perfect menagerie of dogs, ferrets, goats, and fowls—the latter being principally game sorts. His favourite pastime was cock-fighting; but it was, to Dan's great regret, being discountenanced and put down. He had a variety of surnames; "the Corbie,"

as a contraction of his own name, was the most common, but he was known as the "Mowdie" (mole), the "Rat," the "Doctor," the "Vet.," and "Ggemmie," as well as the "Dummie Doctor" or "Dummie."

The eggs he had given to Bell were not from his stock, but had been got in exchange for some of these; and as he had sometimes been employed by Bell as a butcher, there was a trade connection between them, but the intimacy had been purely "professional," as Dan, in the matter of social position or religion, was looked on as quite an outcast; and the description of him, in this respect, ranged from "a poor creature" to "an awfu' man."

Dan had got a setting of eggs from a very rare strain of game fowls, and had been loud in laying off their properties to his cronies, some of whom, on the night that Dan "set" them, took them carefully from under the hen and put ducks' eggs in their place; they then crossed the field, got over Knowe Park wall, and put Dan's eggs under one of Bell's "clockers,"¹ using every precaution not to injure the eggs, as well as to avoid detection.

Dan waited long and wearily for his expected brood; he looked for them on the reckoned day, but it passed, and the next, and the next, until a full week had

¹ Clucking hens.

elapsed, and still no birds. Early on the eighth morning he determined to "pitch" the eggs away, and was angrily stooping down to lift off the hen, which, although it was a great favourite and a "splendid sitter," would have had a rough toss and a long one, when he heard a cheep.

The welcome sound was marrow to his bones. "Eh!" was his first exclamation; "what's that? is't possible after a'?" He heard more cheeping. "Isn't it a gude thing I've been sae patient?" Then looking at the hen, which, but a minute before, he was preparing to use very roughly, he said, "Eh, grannie, grannie, ye're the best clocker in the county; eh, my auld darlin', my queen o' beauty, ye'll no' want your handfu' o' groats for this—I'll gi'e ye a peck; jist anither day, grannie, an' ye'll get oot wi' yer darlin's, ye ace o' diements!"

The cheeping had now become very decided, and Dan, again addressing grannie, said: "Sit on, my flower o' the flock, my fail-me-never, hap¹ the giant-killers wi' yer bonnie, golden, cosy feathers just till the nicht, till their wee jackets an' glancin' spurs are dry; an' I'll bring a' the neebors about seven o'clock when they come hame, and I'll open the door, an' ye'll march out like Wallington at the head o' the Scotch Greys at

¹ Cover carefully.

Waterloo; and will they no' stare when they see your sturdy family following ye like the Royal Artillery?"

He then locked the door, and "warned" his cronies and neighbours to come "sharp seven," and they would see something really worth their while.

Dan was in the fidgets all afternoon. Shortly before seven o'clock a small crowd had gathered in his garden, to which Dan told the pedigree of the birds, and spoke of their qualities in the most glowing terms.

"Let's see them, Dan," said several voices; "let's see them."

"I'm waiting for Watty," said Dan; and turning to a boy, said, "Gang to the house-end, ma man, an' see if he's no' comin';" then addressing his visitors, he said, "Watty's the only man that I'm feared for in this district; his birds hae beaten mine owre often; I'll tether him noo, or I'm cheated."

As Dan finished this speech, Watty, a queer-looking customer wearing a hairy skull-cap, smoking a short black pipe, and with both hands in his pockets, joined the gathering. He gave a side nod to Dan, and said "Hoo's a'?" to the company.

"Noo for the show!" said Dan, as he unlocked the hen-house (it was coal-house, goat-house, and served various other purposes), and flung the door wide open,

saying, "Come awa', grannie, wi' your 'royal family.' There's a pictur', men, for ye."

Grannie's family had been restless, because hungry and particularly thirsty, and she and they obeyed Dan's summons with great readiness and even haste.

Watty, who had till then smoked on in silence, quickly took the pipe out of his mouth, stooped a little, shaded his eyes with one hand, and seemed sadly puzzled. His first remark was :

"Man, Dan, they've awfu' braid nebs" (broad bills).

"Braid nebs, or no' braid nebs," said Dan, "the game's there onyway."

"May be," said Watty, "but they have maist awfu' braid nebs," for by this time he and all the onlookers had "smelt a rat;" "and in ma opinion they're jucks."

"Ye're a juck!" said Dan, looking at him fiercely.

"Dinna look at me, Dan, look at *them*; look at their nebs, look at their wab-feet—is thae no jucks?"

A second glance revealed to Dan that this was too true.

Roars of laughter, which only such an audience can give, ensued, in which "Braid nebs," "Gemm jucks," "Grannie's royal family," "Tether Watty," were heard amidst the noisy peals of the uncontrolled and apparently uncontrollable merriment.

Dan looked unutterable things; his face was one of dismal agony. He took side glances at the crowd;

each followed by a long look—a perplexed, vindictive look—at the ducklings; whilst all the while the crowd waxed merrier, and laughed louder as they saw his miserable, heartbroken countenance.

Watty stooped down to lift a duckling, saying at the same time, “Man, Dan, have ye lost your sight? Div ye no’ see that thae’s jucks? Look at their nebs, their feet, their size; hear their weet-weet;” but “Grannie” barred the pass, flew at his hand, and pecked it sharply. This revived the sorely afflicted Dan, and rousing himself, he said, “Weel dune, grannie!” which the crowd received with a cheer and a very loud laugh.

One of the onlookers, wishing to soothe Dan, said: “Jucks are as gude as hens ony day, Dan; an’ they’re healthy-like birds.”

“You ignorant gomerall!¹ you senseless blockhead! you born idiot!” said Dan, his excitement increasing as he proceeded; “jucks like game-cocks! jucks like the kind o’ game-cocks that should ha’ been there, that were set by my ain hands! haud yer bletherin’² tongue. Somebody’s been puggyin’³ me. If I kent wha dared to tak’ their nap⁴ aff me, I wad gi’e them what they wad mind a’ their days; I would *fell* them!”

A large crowd had now collected in Dan’s garden,

¹ Stupid fellow.

³ Playing monkey tricks.

² Foolish talking.

⁴ Fun.

and when the new-comers heard the cause of the merriment, they joined in it and kept it up.

“What are ye a’ doin’ laughin’ there at, like heeawnies [hyenas]? Out o’ this, every one o’ ye, or I’ll gar some o’ ye laugh on the ither side o’ yer lug [ear]!” said Dan, looking daggers.

“Lock them up, Dan, for fear the witches change them into turkeys,” said one of the crowd.

This made Dan furious: he seized an old spade which lay on the top of his hen-house, and vowed that he “would *fell* ony man that said another word.”

“If ye can catch him,” said a waif, with a knowing wink; and he made off as fast as he could.

“If I can what?” said Dan. “I believe you’re the vagabond that’s puggied me, and I’ll catch ye, supple an’ a’ as ye think ye are!”

Dan started, holding the spade over his head, fury in his eye, vengeance in his heart. The crowd saw that his blood was up, and cried, “Run, run, run for your very life!”

The man got into the field that lay between Dan’s cottage and Knowe Park; Dan followed, as did also many of the crowd. The pursued man, repenting of his rashness, and fearing the worst, as well he might, made straight for Knowe Park wall.

Bell had heard the laughter when milking Daisy;

Mr. and Mrs. Barrie had heard it when taking an evening stroll in the garden, and all three were standing at the wall wondering what could cause it, as the laughter was unusually boisterous. They saw the chase begin. The flying man observed Mr. Barrie, and made toward him as to a city of refuge. When Mr. Barrie saw Dan rushing on, so dangerously armed and so furious, he cried loudly, "Stop, Corbett! stop! I command you."

This made Dan slacken his pace and lower his spade, but he walked sulkily on with the crowd, saying, "I'm no' dune wi' him yet. I'll gi'e him't for this yet.—Wait a wee, just wait a wee," until they came to the wall of the garden.

"Whatever is all this about?" said Mr. Barrie. "What's wrong, Corbett, that you are so furious?"

"A's wrang, sir, a's wrang. I've been rubbit [*i.e.* robbed], an' insulted, an' chagareened by that—" It took Dan a little time to select an epithet strong enough for the occasion, and at the same time fit for the minister's ears. This was a difficult matter; many rushed to his tongue-end, strong, withering, seasoned; undoubtedly, had it not been for Mr. Barrie, he would have fired them off in a volley, and greatly relieved himself thereby. At length he hurled out, "that unhangd vagabond, he's puggied me, but—"

Mr. Barrie looked at Dan, and said, "Stop, Corbett, say no more till your passion cools;" then turning to the crowd he said, "What is the cause of this unseemly uproar?"

Watty and several others began to explain the affair, but every one that attempted it had to stop after saying a word or two; even the offending man, although now quite safe, was unable to get beyond "Dan set hens' eggs" for laughing, and every man in the field was writhing in fits and contortions, through excessive laughter, with the exception of Dan, on whom the laughter was telling like oil on a flame.

Mr. Barrie looked at Dan, and seeing that he was becoming even more ferocious, said calmly: "Corbett, from the behaviour of the crowd I suspect they have been playing some trick on you, and they evidently have succeeded to their entire satisfaction, but to your great annoyance. Please tell me really what has excited you."

Dan told his story. The laughter was quite as general, but became more distant as he proceeded, for whilst telling his tale he scowled on the "grinning baboons," as he called them, and clutched his spade angrily, which still further widened the circle. Although Mr. Barrie remained grave, Mrs. Barrie could not but laugh quietly, and Bell, sheltered by an evergreen

shrub, did so heartily, repeating, "Well, I never!" All at once she stopped, thought a little, then saying to herself, "That explains it," she came close to the wall at the point where Dan stood, and said: "There's a brood o' chickens, lang-leggit, sharp-nebbit things, come to me that I never set; they're maybe yours, they're no ours—they're come-o'-wills."

"What!" said Dan; "whan did they come out?"

"This day week exactly."

"Let's see them. Come in, Watty, an' gie's your skill o' them," said Dan, with a happier but still nervous face; then addressing himself to Bell, he said: "Hoo mony came oot?"

"Eleven out o' thirteen; there were twa eggs did naething."

"That's very gude; that's grand!" said Dan, who was already climbing the wall to get in.

"Had ye no' better wait till the morn's mornin'?" said the considerate Bell. "They're a' shut up for the nicht, an' cosy under their mother's wing; ye'll disturb them, puir things."

"I maun see them the nicht; I'll no' live if I dinna see them the noo, but I'll be real canny wi' them. Come on."

Dan, Watty, and Bell went to the "cavie" or hen-coop, folded back the old bag which had been dropt

over the front of it to keep the inmates warm, and Dan saw to his intense delight two little heads peeping from under their feathery covering. His educated although single eye at once settled the kind: "Game, game, every inch o' them, and baith cocks!" Then turning to his crony he said: "Watty, you'll lift the hen canny, canny, an' I'll tak' stock."

The result was "six cocks an' five hens, the real true-blue breed," declared by Dan, and confirmed by Watty, with the addition of, "Dan, ye're rich noo."

Bell would not hear of them being shifted that night, and ultimately persuaded Dan to "leave them wi' her hen till they were pickin' for themselves; she would take care o' them, an' nae cats could get near them, for she had just gotten new nets."

Dan got Bell to take the ducks,—“he couldn't bear them; there was nae water for them; his fowls wad dab them till there was no' ane left; it wad be a great obleegement to him.”

When Dan got home he could not rest; he smartly took down his fishing-rod and strode to the water-side. The evening air cooled him, and he was further consoled by a good take. Under the “bass” (straw door-mat) at Knowe Park kitchen door next morning, Bell found a ten-pound salmon and three good large trouts—possibly they had not passed the water-bailiffs.

Bell looked at all sides of the question of "what to do with them?" Many difficulties presented themselves to her honest, correct mind, and as the greatest of these was, "What else could she do with them?" she took in the foundlings and used them well.

There was a little coming and going between Bell and Dan, until the chickens were able to shift for themselves. When that was the case, he carried them carefully over to his own house, and shared it with them for a few months. The ducklings thrived with Bell, and she repaid Dan for them and the fish (for she found out that her guess as to its having come from Dan was correct) in several ways, but principally by occasional dozens of her "buttered" eggs. When eggs were abundant, and therefore cheap, she preserved a large quantity by rubbing them when newly laid with a very little butter all over, and keeping them in salt. It was generally thought that she had some special receipt or "secret," for her buttered eggs had a fresh, curdy, rich flavour that few preservers could attain to.

A penurious old maid had complained to Bell that "she did not *understand* her hens; she was quite provoked at them, because in the summer-time, when eggs were only sixpence the dozen, they laid lots, but in the winter-time, when they were more than double that price, they would not lay at all."

Bell's reply was : " I daresay no' ; but 'deed, mem, ye'll need to baith feed them better, an' keep them cleaner and cosier, or they'll do but little for you."

The nicknames by which Dan had formerly been distinguished were, after the affair of the ducklings, dropt entirely out of use, and he was thereafter spoken of as " Braidnebs," although none could use it in his hearing with impunity.

Thomas Scott, the farmer of Babbie's Mill, a forward ill-bred man, was speaking in the market to Mr. Taylor, the elder already referred to in these " Bits." Dan chanced to pass near them, and the miller said, loud enough for him and the most of the folks about the cross to hear him, " Braidnebs or no' braidnebs, the game's there onyway."

Dan scowled at the miller, and tried to suppress his rage. In his own words, " I tried to steek¹ my mouth, but there was a rattlin' in my throat like to choke me. I lookit at Mr. Taylor. He kent,² 'deed a'body kent, that the miller's wife was a yammerin'³ petted cat, an' I said, ' Maister Taylor, there's a big bubblyjock⁴ gangs about Babbie's Mill yonder, but he's dabbit⁵ to death wi' a hen.' "

Poor " Babbie's Mill " was well known to be " hen-

¹ Shut.

⁴ Turkey-cock.

² Knew.

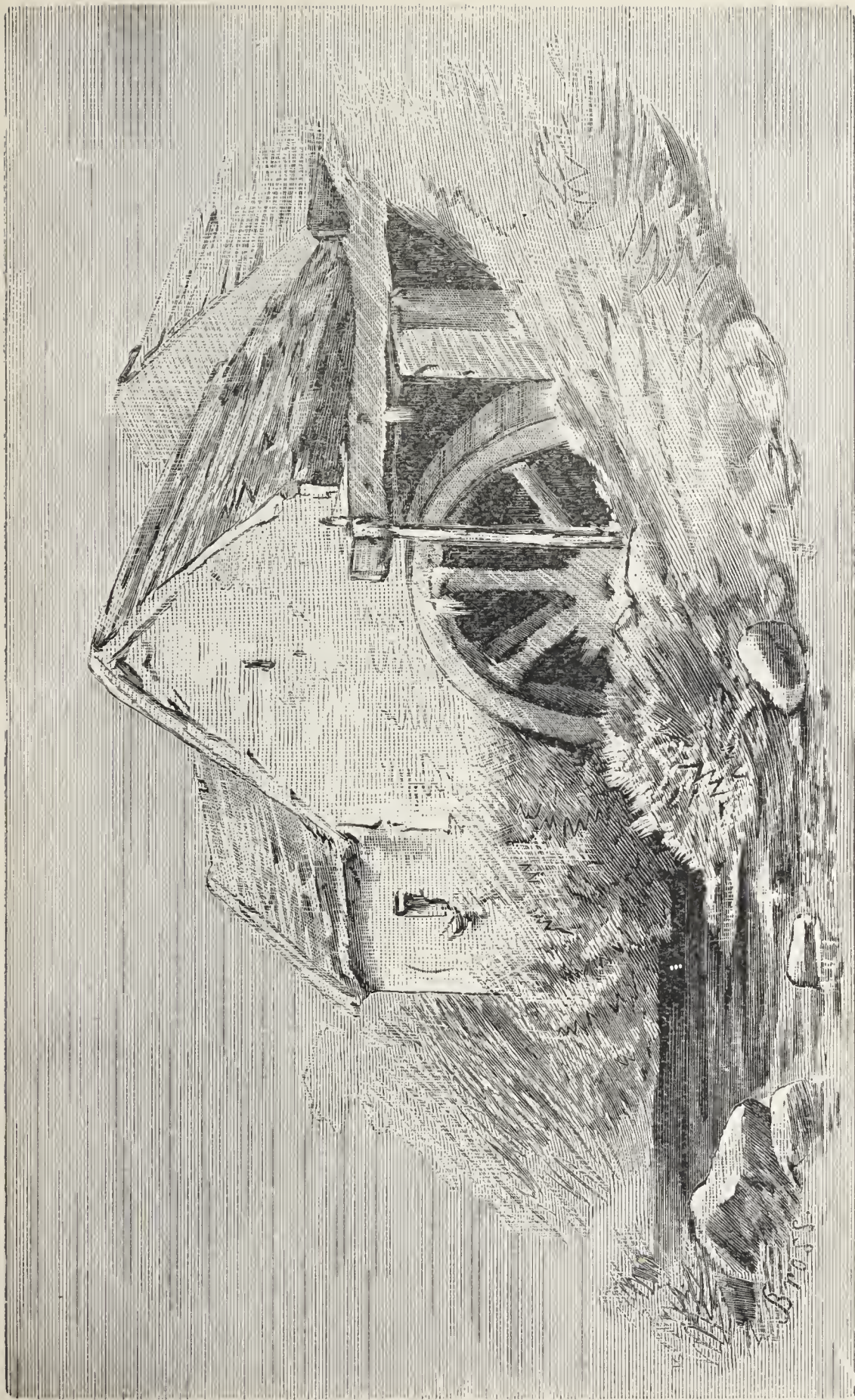
⁵ Pecked.

³ Grumbling.

pecked" at home, and the laugh was so cleverly, so deservedly, so daringly turned against him, that he was nonplussed for a little; but he screwed up his courage, and tried to look disdainfully at Dan. Dan's single eye was glaring at him, and the blank socket of his other eye was twitching nervously. The miller looked bold, and said: "Go about your business, ye ill-tongued scoundrel!"

"Ye what?" shrieked Dan, going close up to the miller, who stepped back and tried to move off; but Dan followed him closely, and poured out, in a voice compounded of bawling, howling, and hissing, whilst all the while his arm moved quickly up and down: "What did ye say?—ill-tongued? Wha has as ill a tongue as yoursel', if it be na your wife? Ye'll daur to insult a man in the middle o' the street that wasna meddlin' wi' you, an' then speak o' him being ill-tongued! Gae hame to Babbie's Mill an' 'clapper' there like yer auld mill, an' tak' double 'mouters'¹ out o' ither folk's sacks to fill yer ain. Ye're no' mealy-mooed [mouthed] though ye're a miller; dicht the stour aff your ain tongue before ye try to mend ither folks. You should be the last man to ca' onybody a scoundrel; them that meets ye in the market wad think butter wadna melt in yer mouth, but let them

¹ A miller's perquisites taken in meal.



BABBIE'S MILL. (Page 152).

gang to Babbie's Mill an' they'll find ye can chew gey hard beans. What d'ye think o' that, Babbie? Wha has the sharpest neb noo? Whare's the game now? I think I've broken your spurs an' toozled¹ yer feathers. Gang hame an' cower in the corner an' get dabbit, Babbie. Ye're weel ca'd Babbie—ye're just a big babbie—'at are ye; an' if ye never kent that afore, ye ken noo, onyway."

Thomas Scott, the miller of Babbie's Mill, slunk off a sulky, crestfallen man. From that day he was nicknamed "the dabbit turkey," and turkeys became known in the district as "babbies,"—not a little to the confusion of those who did not know the above incident, for it was not uncommon to hear about "a slice of a good fat babbie;" that Mrs. Graham had killed twenty babbies and sent them in to Edinburgh for Christmas; and, what was perhaps more puzzling still, that Mrs. Clark "had gotten seven babbies killed by rats in one night, but it didna pit her very sair about, for she had as mony left as she cared for."

I will have occasion to fill in some of the "lights" of Dan's character before I finish these "Bits;" meantime I must leave him in shadow, and proceed in the next chapter to a widely different subject.

¹ Ruffled.

CHAPTER VIII.

BLINKBONNY FREE CHURCH.

“Brought freely their offerings, and with one accord
Sang, Glory and praise and worship to God !
Loud rang the exultation. 'Twas the voice
Of a free people.”

William Sotheby.

THE formation and early history of the Free Church congregation of Blinkbonny is the subject of the following chapter ; and I feel it to be one of special difficulty, not from any scarcity of interesting matter, but from the fear that my treatment of it may unhappily be misconstrued as an indirect attempt to promote sectarian interests.

Nothing is farther from my intention than to make the Established Church compare unfavourably with the Free Church. My desire is to present to my readers a sketch of some of the things that occurred, and of some of the persons that were engaged about them, in as far as my memory will enable me to recall these, not as a partisan, but as an annalist. I disclaim any such ambitious design as to attempt

to embody in the "Bits" a description of what might be taken as a fairly representative Free Church minister and congregation of the Disruption times; and when I have to refer to matters relating to the churches as a whole, I will try to confine myself to what will tend to account for or explain the proceedings of the Free Church of Blinkbonny, without stirring up old questions, or unduly favouring any side.

It is not too much to say that the Disruption of 1843 was a great event, especially so for Scotland. The day on which it took place, the 18th of May 1843, is a day to be remembered, as during its course a noble spectacle of adherence to principle at great personal sacrifice was witnessed, of which any nation might justly feel proud. Nor were there wanting expressions of admiration; for even those who took the opposite side, and considered the Disruption as unnecessary and unwise, recognised it as a grand exhibition of Christian courage.

"All Rome sent forth a rapturous cry,
And even the ranks of Tuscany
Could scarce forbear to cheer."

Hundreds of highly educated men,—men of large experience and sound judgment, many of whom had near and dear ones entirely dependent on them, and

most of them with no means of providing for their households or themselves excepting their incomes as clergymen,—men of like passions and wants, and weaknesses and necessities, as are common to all mankind, left the Church of their fathers, the Church of their life-work, the Church that they loved and had tried to protect and beautify, because they considered *that* to be their duty to their divine Master. The result has happily shown that in Scotland, and in various parts of the world, tens of thousands both of men and women could not only applaud such heroism as a grand sentiment, but that they could and did rally round the heroes, espouse their cause, and provide abundantly and with alacrity the means not only for the supply of their temporal wants, but also for pushing forward the cause they had at heart. Nor was personal effort wanting; for the Disruption leaders and ministers were themselves surprised as well as delighted by the zeal, energy, and devotion with which persons of all ranks became fellow-workers with them in building up the Free Church of Scotland.

The present generation knows but little of the occasional but determined opposition that many landowners displayed, particularly in the refusal of sites for Free churches, expecting and even resolving that

they would thereby starve the people out, and bring them back to the Established Church.

I cannot and should not do more than refer to the great hardships and privations to which ministers and congregations were exposed, not only by the refusal of sites for churches, but by petty tyrannies exercised on them and on those who befriended, even on those who only pitied, these humble worshippers among the fir woods of Strathspey, on the stormy headlands of Mull or Skye, or on the bleak shores and barren moors of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Even in the Lowlands, among the pastoral solitudes of Canonbie, or the gusty winds of Wanlockhead, said to be the highest inhabited place in Scotland, sites were not only refused, but our common humanity was outraged by wanton and sustained interference with such little protection as a thin tent, an old barn, or even an old quarry might afford; and this not only in the year of the Disruption, but for years thereafter, until it was made the subject of parliamentary inquiry.

To those to whom these facts are new, I would recommend the perusal of the *Annals of the Disruption* Part III., recently issued by authority of the Free Church of Scotland. Besides giving many interesting facts of the trials and privations I have referred

to, this book tells that, owing to not being able to procure a site, the expedient was resorted to of a floating manse—the “Betsy,” an old boat of 12 tons burden, which, although very unfit to stand the storms of the Atlantic, was used by the Rev. Mr. Swanson as he passed from one stormy shore to another amongst the Highlands and islands of Scotland, and has been immortalized by Hugh Miller in his interesting book, *The Cruise of the “Betsy.”*

I had written the greater part of these “Bits,” and was asking a friend for information on a kindred subject, when he drew my attention to the *Annals*; and since I have perused the book, I add my humble testimony to the admirable manner in which it presents the interesting and well-told tales of those recent Scottish worthies.

The story of the determined adherence of these suffering witnesses to their conscientious convictions in the face of ill-treatment and persecution, reached Blinkbonny, and it awakened not only a burst of indignation towards those who did the wrong, but it provoked a feeling which manifested itself in substantial help, as well as sympathetic admiration towards those who suffered the wrong; and to this cause, coupled with the high esteem in which Mr. Barrie was held, quite as much as to an intelligent

adherence to any well-thought-out theory of church government, may be attributed the strong hold that the Free Church took of Blinkbonny.

The touch of tyranny laid on those distant members of the "body, the Church," travelled like an electric current, and proved in the case of those members more happily situated to be the touch of nature, in making them feel more and more "kin" to "the bound as bound with them;" and the result was that they stood by them, and by the principles they contended for, so firmly, that those through whom the offence came ceased their violent dealings, and found that the wave of truth, and principle, and progress

"Rolled not back when Canute gave command."

Only those who know Scotch village life well could believe how much of its variety, and interest, and conversation centres in the churches. There is often little else to gather the folks together, and such questions as, "Who's to be assisting you? Is your own man at home just now? Does he belong to 'oor body'? Where did he sit in Stirling? Will he be coming among us?" required nothing more to be said to convey to nearly everybody that they were questions about the Church.

A site was easily found for the Free church in

Blinkbonny, and a church, on what was then known as the Tanfield Hall plan, a plain building of small gables and no architectural pretensions, was ready for occupation before the winter had fairly set in. Previous to this, a regular congregation had been formed. The majority of the elders had "come out" with Mr. Barrie, so that the session was easily made up. The Free Church also revived what most of the other churches in Scotland had overlooked or discarded, viz. the order of deacons, whose special function is to attend to the secular affairs of the congregation, and who are solemnly "ordained and set apart" for that important work; and to this more complete carrying out of the apostolical practice may be attributed much of the success which has attended the financial schemes of the Free Church, as it brought into her service the active, the shrewd, the prudent, and the willing, and provided a congenial sphere for the exercise of their talents.

The Session has as its special province the spiritual affairs of the congregation, and as the higher court it affords greater scope for the exercise of the gifts of utterance, readiness in the Scriptures, etc., on behalf of the members generally, but particularly towards the afflicted, the weary, the backsliding, or the erring. The Session is, besides, associated with

the Deacons' Court in the superintendence, or at least the regulation, of the secular affairs; and there is thereby secured a combination, which old George Brown characterized, on the occasion of the proposal to elect the first deacons in Blinkbonny, thus: "What I said after the meetin' in the hall on the Saturday after Mr. Barrie cam' hame was, 'As it were the company of two armies,' but I didna think o' the Deacons' Court at the time. But I've been readin' the Acks o' the Apostles, an' I find that the want o' deacons hindered the very apostles; but when they got them the murmuring was not only stoppit, but the number o' the disciples increased greatly, an' even a great company o' the very priests, the unlikeliest of all kinds o' folks, were added to the Church. I wonder what for every kirk hasna deacons? Maybe it's because Stephens an' Philips are ill to find; and I'm inclined to think that we'll a' find that we've a great deal to learn about how to conduct kirk business o' a' kinds."

I became a member of the first deacons' court.

When our church was fit for use, we parted from our Secession friends with a grateful sense of their generous treatment of us, which we expressed as warmly as we could, and there is still existing much kindly interchange of brotherly affection between the two congregations.

When we opened the new church, we were especially gratified at the readiness with which several persons offered to place themselves at the disposal of the congregation, according to their ideas of what they could do. The appointment of a church officer or beadle was brought up at a congregational meeting; but it was very quickly settled by Walter Dalglish, a jobbing gardener, who had been from the first a staunch adherent of the Free Church. "Ye'll need nae paid beacles," said Walter, rising half off his seat; "I'll serve ye in that capacity if ye'll alloo me, and be proud to do't for naething."

He proved a capital beadle, and when the funds were prosperous he was offered a salary. His answer to this proposal was unanswerable. "Christian friends," said he, "I've been mair than paid already. Me an' ma household have had what we read o' in Second Samuel, sixth chapter an' twalth verse, how the Lord blessed Obed-edom an' all his household, when the ark rested in his house for three months. If ye're pleased wi' me, just let me do as I've been doing; or tell me hoo I can do better, an' ye'll no' need to tell me twice if I can help it."

For the leading of the psalmody, the precentorship, there were several ready offerers. Of these, Andrew Taylor, the son of Mr. Taylor, the elder already

spoken of, most frequently occupied the "desk," as the precentor's seat was called (sometimes, however, the "bunker"). On one occasion it was the "turn" of his worthy father to stand at the "plate" in the lobby where the "collection" was made, along with a deacon named William Morrison, who was by trade a joiner, and had been working for the greater part of the summer in a neighbouring county at a new mansion-house. Andrew Taylor had a good voice of considerable power and sweetness, and William Morrison did not know that he was to lead the singing that day. As soon as his clear, silvery tone caught the deacon's ear, he turned quickly to Mr Taylor, and said, "Wha's that that's precentin'?"

"It's our Andrew," said Mr. Taylor.

"Your Andrew, Mr. Taylor!" said William, extending his hand; and taking Mr. Taylor's, he shook it warmly. "Your Andrew! Ah, Maister Taylor, Maister Taylor, it's glorious a'thegither! It's by-ordinar' grand to see sae mony finding out that they're like the thousand an' seven hunder an' threescore in the ninth o' First Chronicles, 'very able men for the work of the service of the house of God,' that were clean idle before. Eh, Maister Taylor, Maister Taylor! I maun join in,—I *cannot* help mysel'."

And these two men, standing at the plate in the

lobby opposite the outer door, sent their voices into the street, for they knew the Psalms too well to need any book; and the appropriate words added strength to their lungs as they sang part of the 144th Psalm to the tune "New London":

"That, as the plants, our sons may be,
In youth grown up that are;
Our daughters like to corner-stones,
Carved like a palace fair."

I may here state that not the least observable matter in the new state of things was the additional meaning and force found in the Psalms of David. Possibly they are best adapted for a militant, progressive, almost agitated state of the Church. In our parish church, by the same people, they had been listlessly sung and seldom "entered into;" but in the new church, even in the reading of them by the minister, there was new light thrown on old psalms. Many in the congregation could be seen giving an appreciative nod, and if nearer them, you would have heard a very slight "hem," which meant, "I didn't observe that before."

There was possibly a tendency to apply to present circumstances what suited other and often all times; at all events, the psalms were sung with intense feeling. To specify the favourites would be to copy a

great part of the Book of Psalms. If anything, the nineties had the palm, but the forty-sixth—"God is our refuge and our strength," Luther's "*Ein Feste Burg*"—became as popular with us as it had been in Germany.

Perhaps this may account for the slow progress which hymns made for many years in Scotland. Many of these noble compositions of Christian genius are now used as vehicles of praise, and they unquestionably have their place and power in the service of song; but the older folks still maintain that they want "grup;" and the early Scottish Church found ample material for expressing its aspirations or presenting its tribute of grave sweet melody in the old Psalms of David.

For Mr. Barrie the summer was one of special excitement. He was much occupied with his own congregation, and with the affairs of the Free Church of Scotland generally. He had always been a studious man, was a fair scholar, and had given conscientious attention to his preparations for the pulpit, and to the visitation of the sick. But he now appeared to have got new life, and an increased power of penetration into many parts of the Christian's duty. Instead of relaxing what is called in Scotland discipline, or lowering the terms of communion, he was more em-

phatic than ever in pressing on all, especially on advanced young persons, not to profess what they did not feel. He seemed a man absorbed in his Master's work, and his former reading experience and observation became a magazine whence he could draw for his ready service illustration, incentive, or appeal.

He not only surprised others, but he was a wonder to himself. Thoughts flowed in on him as he prepared himself in the study for pulpit work; light broke in so as to surprise and refresh him; parts of Scripture that seemed barren before, were now bristling with meaning and practical lessons. What surprised him most was that he hardly ever looked into commentaries or books of systematic theology. The circumstances of himself and his people became so real to him, that nearly every verse he read seemed to suggest a good text for a sermon; and his difficulty was in arranging his ministrations so as to give to each part its proportionate share of attention.

"I seem to myself to be," said he to a brother minister, "like the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple. Up till now I have been lame from my mother's womb; but I feel as if my feet and ankle bones had received strength, and now it is with me more like walking, and leaping, and praising God."

His fears as to the support of his family, which had

been so very trying to him, were now gone; and although he did little in the way of directly stimulating congregational liberality, he in the course of his preaching showed, what few of us had noticed before, the great prominence that giving to God's cause has both in the Old and New Testaments, and its reflex influence on the Church. This went to the hearts of the people, and they offered willingly. During the first year the congregation raised more than had been collected in the Established church of the parish for fifty years. .

Over Scotland much of the same spirit existed. The continuous rain of £1000 a-day, as Dr. Chalmers called it, kept pouring on,—so much so that those who were looked on as martyrs in '43, were spoken of as heroes in '44. Indeed, their heroism, like all other heroism, was by many considered rashness; and when they undertook to erect schools as well as churches, it was thought that the "ship would soon get over-freighted and go to the bottom;" but it seemed as if the more they attempted, the more they prospered, until, like the Israelites in Egypt, the people multiplied and waxed very mighty.

Well do I remember the evening of our first annual soiree. The treasurer's report told of some £400 paid, and other £300 promised. As soon as it was

finished, Mr. Barrie stood up, and without book, without even giving out the number of the psalm, repeated with great vigour:

“When Sion’s bondage God turn’d back,
Like men that dream’d were we;
Then filled with laughter was our mouth,
Our tongue with melody,” etc.

The singing *was* hearty.

The experience of hundreds of Free churches in Scotland was similar to that of Blinkbonny; and when we consider that the members were a moiety of what those of the Established Church had been previous to the Disruption, and that they had not been trained to systematic giving (for it is matter of history that the contributions of the Church of Scotland previous to 1843, for charitable and religious purposes, were utterly disproportionate to her wealth, and fell far short of what the Dissenters of the period raised), we are the more struck with the stream of devout and intelligent liberality which flowed into the Free Church treasury steadily and continually, and which is still flowing.

The years 1844–1847 were severe years for the country. Owing to the potato disease and consequent dulness of trade, poverty and want came to many a door, and hundreds not only denied themselves

luxuries, but many things formerly considered necessities were more sparingly used, in order to alleviate the distresses of suffering Ireland and the Highlands, as well as the general poor; and instead of the one call interfering with the other, both were promptly and nobly met, to an extent that would have been declared unattainable a few years before.

I cannot refrain from making special mention of the cause of foreign missions. It can readily be supposed that with churches, and manses, and in many places schools, to build, and the ministry to support by spontaneous contributions, with no fixed source of income, and little experience of voluntary liberality, the Free Church would have had so much to do at home that there was neither call nor means to undertake foreign mission work.

The mission question was a perplexing one. The missionaries of the Church of Scotland, being out of the arena of immediate conflict, yet conversant with the matters in dispute, were as well qualified as any men could be to judge of the points of contention; and their decision as to whether they would declare themselves as adhering to the Established or Free Church, was anxiously looked for.

To all human appearance the Free Church could do nothing for them,—certainly could guarantee nothing.

However willing their spirit might be, their flesh seemed in this matter helplessly weak. Moreover, the "Non-Intrusion" matter was a home question, and did not directly affect the missionaries, and the Established Church had still great wealth and power without any such extra call on her resources.

The decision of the missionaries was unanimously and resolutely in favour of the Free Church. When this fact was announced to the Assembly at its meeting in Glasgow in the autumn of 1843, it created intense excitement. The enthusiasm was indescribable. For some minutes the meeting was a Babel of cheering, and shouts of joy, and mutual congratulations, friend rushing to friend to relieve their feelings by violent shakings of hands; and every now and again during the meeting the pent-up gladness exploded vociferously.

The Free Church had already undertaken enormous responsibilities. Would they assume this additional one? Dared they? Was it not a question of the certain king who had ten thousand soldiers to meet twenty thousand? Had they a clear call to go forward? It was a solemn question. Yes required strong—very strong faith. Would they say Yes? No was the loud answer of sight,—clearly, unquestionably, No.

The foundation of the Home Church had been laid in a way that was wonderful in their eyes. Was the building ready for this grand cope-stone?

"It will crush it to atoms," said the adversary.

"Never!" was the triumphant reply. "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it!" And the support of the missionaries and mission stations was undertaken with enthusiasm.

All the funds collected for the mission cause were of course in the hands of the Church of Scotland, and retained by it, although these had been largely supplied by those who now formed the Free Church. The mission premises abroad were also kept by them, and even the mission libraries and educational appliances, although these had been mostly brought together by the personal efforts or friends of the missionaries, so that the Free Church got the living men only.

This was according to the *letter* of the law, but many of the best men in the Established Church strongly insisted on the funds, etc. being partly apportioned to the Free Church, and that the property should go with the missionaries, as equity and consistency alike indicated, even in the things that were

Cæsar's. A reverend father of the Established Church thus expressed himself on this subject :

"The question yet to be settled is, are they ours? Did I say yet to be settled? That depends on the court in which the question is tried. In the highest court, the decision of the greater than Solomon would be in this matter in favour of the Free Church. 'Give her the living child, she is the mother thereof;' this has already been done, and it is a *mean* thing to send her empty away."

When it was proposed to contribute regularly for foreign missions in Blinkbonny, the more experienced members deemed it inexpedient until our home affairs were put on a sure basis, but some of the ladies espoused the cause keenly. They with some difficulty prevailed on Mr. Taylor to introduce the subject at a general meeting. His speech was far from being hearty; it was a mere question, "Could the members give to any scheme they liked?"

"Certainly," replied the chairman.

"Well, there are some that want to give to the missionaries, and I think we should appoint a committee."

This was done, and before a year had passed £42 were collected. Strange to say, the other schemes seemed to suffer so little, that even George Brown, who was one of the most timid, "thocht the folk were made o' siller."

How different this was from what we had done for missions in the old Church ! I remember of the well-to-do farmer of Ramsay lands asking me for two six-pences for a shilling, adding, "Isna this a collection for the missionaries ? I fancy we'll hae to gi'e them a sax-pence." Next week he gave to a curling club a silver medal.

He was justly esteemed as a good, kind man, but his "saxpence " not unfairly represents the ideas of the times on the subject of missions.

It took a considerable time to reconcile the older folks to the exercise of missionary liberality. As I was coming from a meeting in which the missionary treasurer had announced that there had been collected for foreign missions during the previous year upwards of £42, James Wilkie, an old gamekeeper, spoke thus :

"Mr. Martin, did I hear richt, think ye ? did our treasurer say that we (?) had gathered forty-twa pound for thae missionars ?"

"Quite right," said I ; "forty-two pounds odds, James."

"It's a great heap o' siller," said he ; "div ye no' really think that it's a pity to see a' that gude siller gaun out o' the country ?"

I will close this chapter with two reminiscences of Dr. Duff in the Free Church General Assembly.

The Home Mission report was being commented on by Sheriff Monteith. He said that home missions had not the romance about them that foreign missions had.

Dr. Duff sprang to his feet with a bound like a tiger springing on its prey, and said something like this :

“Romance, sir ! Romance did I hear you say !—romance ? Are the burning suns of India romance ? leaving home and kindred, and ease and comfort, romance ? exposing your family to the horrors of heathenism, romance ?” At each sentence he stepped nearer Sheriff Monteith, until, while saying something rather personal about not leaving his comfortable table to visit the dens of infamy in the Cowgate, his clenched fist was dangerously near the Sheriff’s face. It was not a long speech, but the look of burning indignation with which he delivered it, and the energy of his gesticulation, told powerfully. At the last words, “Romance, forsooth !” he sat down exhausted.

Never was “oil thrown on the waters” with more quiet force and effect than by Dr. Buchanan on that occasion. A few words sufficed, words of remarkable dignity and tenderness, and at their close he took Sheriff Monteith by the one hand, and Dr. Duff by the other, and with great heartiness they shook hands on the plat-

form of the Assembly amidst the loud applause of the audience. I thought then, and I think yet, that I never saw three as fine-looking, noble-hearted Christian gentlemen,—certainly never grouped on such a striking occasion. It seemed to me to be a living group representing Faith, Hope, Charity, but I would not undertake to determine which was which.

My other reminiscence is of the evening meeting after the union of the Free Church with the Original Secession Church. I can recall Dr. Duff's massive, sunburnt face, his thick, erect, bristling hair, and his fervid eloquence.

He spoke of looking out on his return from India for the grand old ministers he used to meet in his younger days. "Where were Dr. Andrew Thomson, Dr. David Dickson, old Dr. M'Crie, Dr. Chalmers? Not in the haunts of living men. He had to go to the graveyards and content himself with honouring their memories; and it made him feel as if

'The flowers o' the forest were a' wede away.'

But when he returned to the familiar streets, he forgot his grief as he saw Dr. M'Crie, the worthy son of a worthy father, Dr. John Brown, Dr. Grey, Dr. Glover, and such men carrying aloft the standard of the Master. Truly great was the multitude that pub-

lished the good news in Scotland, but what of India with its tens of millions? How was the Church discharging its duty to the heathen world?"

He then said with a persuasive smile: "A mother in Scotland thus showed her loyalty for an earthly prince:

‘I hae but ae son, my brave young Donald,
But gin I had ten they wad follow Prince Charlie.’

Why not the same, why not greater devotion to the Prince of Peace, the King of kings? I ask not the tens, although that would be but right, but in this day of small things I ask but one in ten."

CHAPTER IX.

BELL AT HOME IN KNOWE PARK.

“ An’ wow but the lassie was pawky an’ slee,
For she smiled an’ she smirkit till a’ man,
Growin’ a’bodie’s bodie, baith muckle an’ wee,
An’ our folk wadna let her awa’, man ;
For when there was trouble or death in the house,
She tended the sick-bed as quiet as a mouse,
An’ wrought three folks’ wark aye sae canny an’ douce,
Ye wad thocht she did naething ava, man.

James Ballantine.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Walker found, when he came to the parish of Blinkbonny, that the congregation was very much smaller than it had been under Mr. Barrie, he did not manifest a spirit of rivalry towards the Free Church ; and, as his pulpit work did not require much preparation, owing to his having a good stock of sermons to fall back on, he set himself first to visit every house in the parish. He was a kind, sensible, neighbourly man, and had a quiet way of giving useful hints, and, where needed, remonstrances or reproofs that often produced good effects.

While Mr. Morrison, the Secession minister, was the best theologian, and Mr. Barrie the best preacher, Mr. Walker was the best pastor. When one met

Mr. Morrison, he was "complaisant" and heavy. Mr. Barrie was polite, but he seemed at one time abstracted, and at another as if he was too late for some engagement; but Mr. Walker was courteous, affectionate, interesting, and interested. In their preaching, Mr. Barrie was the most rousing and popular, Mr. Morrison the most profound and exegetical, Mr. Walker the most sympathetic and practical. Next to the Bible, Mr. Walker's favourite book for pulpit preparation was Matthew Henry's grand old Commentary. Mr. Morrison, on the other hand, consulted a great variety of authorities, ranging from Augustine and the Fathers to Robert Hall. Mr. Barrie drew largely from Calvin, Boston, Flavel, and the Puritan divines, as well as from the church historians, Knox, Neander, d'Aubigné, M'Crie, etc.; and between the three, Blinkbonny was well off for ministers.

Mr. Walker took great interest in the administration of the poor laws, and as a member of the Parochial Board he pled the cause of the deserving, and firmly opposed the demands of the indolent or lazy, got up local flower-shows, and gave cottagers and others useful hints as to their gardens, so much so that these became the pride of the place. He was unsparing in his extermination of all preventable nuisances and everything injurious to the health of the community,

tried to get a better play-green for the boys, joined in the game of curling, and, stout as he was, he was a tough opponent, but at the same time a very pleasant man to play with. Although he never intruded his profession, he never forgot, far less disgraced it, and Blinkbonny soon came to look on him as the most useful man in the place—just a very fine man; and although leisurely in some of his ways, he was well qualified to take an active part in public affairs.

He seldom passed any remark about the doings of the Free Church, and those he did pass were of an in-offensive kind. He did not grumble at their successes, nor did he show any ill-feeling towards its adherents. Certainly he wondered at the interest their services seemed to excite, and the money they could command. He thought there were too many meetings and evening services, which might interfere with family and domestic duties; that they were in danger of spiritual pride (there he was right); but he thought upon the whole that good was being done,—at least he hoped so, and as the minister of the parish, he rejoiced in everything that promoted its real welfare.

He had a few good sermons, and was especially proud of a series of lectures on the parables. These he had commenced to re-deliver, although he did not do so in strict chronological order. One of his best,

he thought, was on the Ten Virgins ; but he felt crest-fallen when, after asking an old friend's opinion of it, he was answered :

“ Mr. Walker, I've heard that lecture twenty years ago, and middling often since then. The virgins are auld maids by this time ; ye should either marry them off or let them alane.”

The lecture Mr. Walker thought his very best was about the sower going out to sow. It was a congenial subject, as he had given agriculture very great attention, and he actually made it into two lectures, thus spreading it over two Sabbaths. He had preached the first half, and intimated that on next Sabbath he would resume the subject, and hoped to conclude it. Unluckily for him, an eminent clergyman from Edinburgh was to preach in the Free church on that day, and for the first time he felt chagrined at seeing a very small audience in his church.

He said to his candid friend John Tait, on the following Monday, “ that he was sorry to see so few folk in church yesterday. If I know myself at all, I feed my people with the finest of the wheat, and my memory of what Mr. M'—— was at college and in the hall is, that he was an indifferent scholar, although a showy speaker.”

Johnnie's reply was at least honest : “ Oh ay,

Mr. Walker, nae doubt, nae doubt ye gi'e us as ye ca't the finest o' the wheat; but our wife bakes the best wheat scones in the kintra-side, and even they are the better o' a little butter or jelly or honey to them; and maybe ye're a wee scrimpit o' that sort o' kitchen to mak' your substantial fare mair toothsomer."

Between Mr. Barrie and Mr. Walker the intercourse was cordial, although not familiar. And Bell got reconciled to Mr. Walker, and even jealous of him when she saw that the manse garden and park were fully as productive as they had been under her management, although not quite so tidy.

The miracle already referred to, of how Mrs. Barrie could do what she did, and as she did it, on the income they had, still continued to exercise the wondering attention of the neighbourhood.

The flitting had been attended with considerable expense. Some new things had to be got for Knowe Park. The children were growing up, and the boys were, like all healthy boys, "heavy" on their clothes; and besides, Mr. Barrie was a liberal contributor for the maintenance of ordinances and the erection of the new church.

Mrs. Barrie, seconded by her faithful Bell, stuck to her thrifty practices and household duties, whilst at the same time she took great interest in all that con-

cerned the church, and by her good sense and motherly counsel quietly did much useful work. She made Mr. Barrie her first worldly care, and this enabled him to overtake his arduous duties timeously and efficiently.

Bell was as constantly diligent as ever, working away in the house, amongst her live stock, and in getting the garden up to her standard. When the winter evenings set in, she kept stitching away, trying to keep the boys all right; for that was her special department, as Mrs. Barrie attended to the girls' attire. The wires for knitting stockings were nimbly plied at all spare hours; and as she could read and knit at the same time, she became well up in Free Church matters, as she got a "look of the newspapers" in the evening. She paid little attention to the general news, but perused with great interest "a'thing about kirks." She also read with much care all the Free Church magazines.

When November term came, Mrs. Barrie, as she had generally done, put into an envelope Bell's half-yearly wages, or "fee" as Bell called it, and handed the parcel to Bell.

There was an understanding between them that there was to be no "speakin' at the 'speakin' time," that is, no asking Bell if she was "stayin'." Mrs. Barrie had done this for the first three years, but Bell

beseached her not to do it again,—“ she couldna bide it ; if she wasna gaun to stop, she wad gi’e plenty warnin’.” And although Bell’s fee had been increased more than once, she had never asked an advance, nor had Mrs. Barrie ever told her of it beforehand ; indeed, the payment of the fee seemed to be the most trying part of the intercourse between Mrs. Barrie and Bell, from the strange feeling that some fine natures have when money matters are referred to. Not only was there little said on such occasions, but Bell felt at a loss for words to thank Mrs. Barrie for raising her fee. She seldom got past “ it’s far ower kind—far ower kind, ’deed is’t.” And Mrs. Barrie felt the same difficulty, for her reply rarely exceeded, “ It’s not that, Bell ; I wish ”— Then she passed on to some other subject, and both seemed to be relieved, and to enter afresh on another six months’ unclouded intercourse.

On this occasion, however, Mrs. Barrie was surprised at Bell’s troubled look, and more so at her words.

“ Mrs. Barrie,” said Bell, handing her back the money, “ I canna tak’ it, and I daurna tak’ it. Dinna be angry at me, an’ oh, mem, dinna press me. This has been a heavy half-year on ye, an’ if I daur’d offer ye what little I hae, I wad gladly gi’e a’ my ‘ stockin’ fittie ;’ for an old rig-and-fur stocking was Bell’s purse, and she

kept it for safety in the bottom of the case of the kitchen clock, covered up with an old dirty dusty wrapper, the only regularly dusty thing in her kitchen.

Mrs. Barrie thoroughly appreciated Bell's generous thoughtfulness, and although she was put about by it, she tried to keep this from Bell.

"Bell," said Mrs. Barrie, "you're exceedingly kind, it's very thoughtful indeed of you ; it's just like yourself. But I'm thankful to say that there is not the slightest need for your perplexing yourself about us, for we've enough and to spare, so please say no more about the matter ; but thank you very much, Bell, all the same."

Bell was loth to yield, and only did so after repeated pressing. Mrs. Barrie left the kitchen, and had hardly sat down in the parlour, when Bell came in, and laying a one-pound note on the table, said :

"Ye've countit wrang, mem, if you please ; ye've gi'en me a pound ower much."

"No, Bell, not too much," said Mrs. Barrie ; "too little if you like, but not too much. You told me just now it had been a heavy half-year with us. What has it been to you ? You have done two women's work."

"No' me, Mrs. Barrie, no' me. I have a gude place, an's no oppressed nae way. Twae women's wark ?—

pity their men or their mistresses ! It's nae wark at a' ; naebody meddles wi' me ; I dae as I like."

"Because you always like to do well, Bell."

"I wish I did," said Bell, and was leaving the room, when Mrs. Barrie said : "Take the pound with you, Bell."

"No, Mrs. Barrie ; excuse me, mem," said Bell. "I never disobeyed ye before, but I will not take that pound—I could not take it."

"Do what you like with it, Bell, but pray take it away ; it's yours."

Bell lifted it, and said, "For His cause." Her fee had been a consecrated thing in her mind for some time, and seeing Mrs. Barrie had declined it, Bell, with great comfort to herself, apportioned it between the Building, Sustentation, and Mission Funds of the Free Church ; with the exception of one pound, with which she bought "Alloa yarn," and knitted cosy under-garments for the whole household, herself excepted. She did this at odd times, almost by stealth ; and on New-Year's day, when each inmate was wishing Bell a happy New Year, she put into their hands the cosy clothing, saying, "That's your hansel ;" but in the case of Mrs. Barrie it was varied by, "That's pairt o' yon pound."

Bell's cookery is a subject I cannot handle as it

should be handled. I have occasionally heard her tell of the regular winter Sabbath-day dinner as follows:

“There’s nothing beats a sheep’s head. We hae ane every Sabbath; it’s cheap, and very handy. There’s this gude thing about it, it needs little watchin’, and disna gang wrang wi’ ower lang boilin’: cleek it on, an’ get it fair through the boil, then cleek it up so as it’ll no’ boil ower an’ pit oot the fire, an’ ye may lock the door an’ gang a’ to the kirk, an’ come oot when you like. It disna matter for an hour or twa, either; ’deed it’s a’ the better o’ plenty o’ the fire—especially if ye hae a handfu’ o’ the ‘blue pat-pea’ in’t, an’ plenty barley. Then what’s like the broth on a cauld day? An’ then there’s the tongue for the bairns, an’ the head for the big folks. I like the feet best mysel’ [that’s like you, Bell]; an’ the broth’s grand next day—they’re a denner themsel’s.”

In cooking potatoes Bell could boil them till they were ragged in the “jackets,” but “mealy” all through; bake them in the oven with their skins on, so that with a little salt butter they were like eggs, and “suppit” as eggs are; fry them till they were “delicious;” beat and brown them with a little milk so as to render them a satisfying meal. Moreover, with the addition of a little dried fish, cod or ling, eggs or odd scraps, she made such dainty dishes as I cannot get

reproduced. Possibly the potato disease may account for this.

I can speak from experience of her wonderful success with salt herrings,—“food for a king,” as Mr. Taylor used to say,—and am tempted to speak of her stews and “hashes,” and haggises and white puddings; for these were never too rich, but palatable, digestible, and tempting, and often they were made out of what modern cooks would put aside as unfit for family use. Out of common pot barley she made a delightful pudding, that beat rice pudding hollow. But I must not make this a cookery-book.

I asked Bell for some receipts on one occasion.

“There’s nae receipt about it, Mr. Martin,” said she; “just gang richt aboot it, an’ ye canna miss. It’s just as easy as A-B-buff when ye’re into the way o’t.”

“Just so, Bell; but how do ye get into the way o’t?”

“Tuts, Mr. Martin,” said Bell playfully, “that’s no’ a man-body’s parish; and as the sayin’ is, ‘Hunger’s gude kitchen;’ altho’, in ma way o’ thinkin’, there’s as muckle, if no’ mair, lies wi’ the cook as wi’ the flesher,—it are thae.”

Bell had always on hand what cooks call “stock,” on which she could fall back as occasion required for soups and gravies.

On a bitterly cold day, a Mr. Kirkwood called at Knowe Park by the desire of a Colonel Gordon, to make inquiries as to his relationship to Mrs. Barrie, whose maiden name, as already stated, was Mary Gordon.

Mr. Barrie was from home, and the family dinner was, in Bell's phrase, an "offpit;" and Mrs. Barrie, knowing this, expressed her regret that she could hardly ask Mr. Kirkwood to join them at their homely meal, as the chief dish was plain potato-soup.

Mr. Kirkwood's face brightened at the familiar name, which reminded him of his early home; for he had been abroad for over thirty years, and had only recently returned to Scotland to spend the evening of his days.

"Potato-soup!" said he; "ah, that recalls old times. If it is not presuming on your hospitality, I would like immensely to renew my acquaintance with a very old favourite."

"With great pleasure," said Mrs. Barrie, as she showed him into the parlour.

It would be unjust to call Mr. Kirkwood a gourmand, but he was an epicure, fastidious in culinary matters, and an authority in gastronomics. He was accordingly helped to the soup. One spoonful brought a smile, partly of surprise, but quite as much of delight, to his face; the second confirmed the favourable verdict, and the contents of the plate soon disappeared.

He looked at Mrs. Barrie, slightly moved his plate, and said hesitatingly, "May I presume?"

"Most certainly," said Mrs. Barrie. "I'm so pleased that you relish the soup; it is quite the weather for doing so."

Plate number two was more leisurely emptied, with certain appreciative motions of the lips and face, and he again cast a lingering look towards the tureen, and said: "Excuse me, madam, I assure you that I never tasted any soup equal to this, although my knocking about the world has familiarized me with nearly every sort and every style of cookery. It's superb; it's simply magnificent. Would it be outraging the laws of politeness?" He had again slightly lifted his plate. Mrs. Barrie was greatly pleased, and served out plate number three with her happiest smile, for the table was now a merry one.

When the third plate was finished, she jocularly refilled the soup divider, and, looking toward him, said, "Do allow me."

Mr. Kirkwood, who was in great good humour, said: "You are very kind, and I feel as if I could relish more, but we must draw the line somewhere, so no more, thank you. But pray, Mrs. Barrie, may I ask if your cook would favour me with the receipt?"

"I don't think there's any," said Mrs. Barrie.

"Then may I see your cook?"

"We have only one maid-of-all-work," was the reply.

"Then she's a treasure. May I see her?"

"Certainly;" and Bell was called in.

Mr. Kirkwood rather confused Bell by abruptly asking, "How ever did you make this magnificent soup, cook? I never had anything equal to it."

Bell saw that he was in earnest, and that Mrs. Barrie seemed in great spirits, so she at once said:

"It's just ordinary pitattie soup, but the day I had a ham bone, an' the stock was gude; an' ma way is aye boil the pitatties separate, then pour them, then beat them, or as we ca'd 'champ' them, and add them to the stock, and steer and mix them weel, an' be sure that baith them an' the plates is hett."

"Ordinary soup!" said Mr. Kirkwood; "that's a matter of opinion; my idea is that it is the *ne plus ultra*."

"The what?" said Bell. "What kind o' apples?"

"Ask this young gentleman," said Mr. Kirkwood, looking to James; "he's doubtless a Latin scholar. My translation is 'the top of the tree,' 'the head sheaf,' the 'never was beat,' the *crème-de-la-crème*;" and Mr. Kirkwood left in great spirits, warmly thanking Mrs. Barrie and Bell, both of whom were much amused by the little incident.

James gave Bell the literal translation of *ne plus ultra*, viz. "nothing more beyond," "nothing better," not a little proud of having been called in as interpreter.

Mrs. Barrie, knowing that Bell was well acquainted with her family history, told her that Mr. Kirkwood had been making inquiries about her father, at the request of some Colonel Gordon, and asked Bell if she knew anything about the Colonel or Mr. Kirkwood.

Bell said no, but that Dan Corbett was coming to see about something in the afternoon (it was to kill the pig, but Bell was too well bred to put it so plainly), and she would ask him, as he "kenn'd a' the folk round about; and Dan will be divertit when I tell him that Mr. Kirkwood said oor pitattie soup was like his game fowls, for he spake o' them as 'never was beat,' an' 'the top o' the tree.' I've been thinkin' that he might mean that they were half pitattie soup, and half 'cockie-leekie.'"

After Dan's immediate work was over at Knowe Park, he was a good deal surprised when Bell asked him to "come in and get a cup o' tea, for it was a cauld nicht, an' she wantit to speak to him about twa or three ither things;" and he was even more astonished when Bell sat down with him. He had the diffidence sometimes so strongly developed in an outcast, and it was with

difficulty that he was persuaded to draw even his chair near the table. What had taken Bell to be so gracious he could not think, nor could she. There was a something that had led her to look on Dan of late with pity, then with interest, then with a desire to try "an' mak' something o' the puir creatur' ;" and to-night she actually went the length of saying, "As it was very stormy ootside, he micht smoke in the kitchen if he wad blaw the smoke up the chimney as much as he could."

Dan's first remark after tea was over, and after he had gauged the angle at which to deliver the smoke into the chimney, was, "I think ye'll find Knowe Park fit ye fine, but I canna comprehend what gar'd Mr. Barrie leave the auld manse."

Bell tried to explain the matter, but the points were far too fine for Dan's rough-and-ready way of reasoning, and he said :

"I wad 'a been very sorra if I had been him. The Government as ye speak o' wasna meddlin' wi' *him*, and he was weel likit ; an' they say this new kirk is takin' a heap o' siller. I wad 'a bidden in the auld ane."

"He couldna dae that for his principles, although we a' left the auld manse, as ye ca'd, wi' a heavy heart ;" and Bell spoke to Dan at considerable length about

the Disruption, and the family, and brought in "wee Nellie" and her death, and her grave in the old kirk-yard very touchingly.

"Aweel," said Dan, "I think ye were the mair fules to leave. Maister Walker's a nice man, but so is Mr. Barrie; and for a' I can see, the tane is exactly the same as the tither. Wad Mr. Barrie no gang back yet?"

"Never," said Bell warmly; "ye may as weel try to lift the milkin' stane o' Dumbarton!"¹

As Bell said this, Dan's pipe dropped out of his cheek, and he gave a nervous start; his only eye fixed itself on Bell with more than usual firmness, and he said, "What do ye ken about the milkin' stane o' Dumbarton?"

"I come frae Dumbarton; sae does Mrs. Barrie: did ye no' ken that afore, Dan?"

"No me," said Dan; "hoo could I ken'd till ye tell't me? I never thocht on the matter at a'; it was nae business o' mine."

"Oh," said Bell, "the mistress was a daughter, the only daughter, o' Mr. Gordon o' the Grainaries."

¹ The name given to an enormous mass of rock, which according to local tradition fell from the Castle rock into the cow park of primitive Dumbarton. One or more women who were milking their cows are said to have been smothered by it: if that is the case, the guide may safely assert that their bodies are there yet, as the "milking stone" will weigh thousands of tons.

Dan rose in intense excitement, and said, "Preserve me, I maun awa' Bell; dinna speak to me ony mair about that, I canna bear't the noo. Oh, let me gang! let me gang!"

Bell was astonished at Dan's sudden excitement, and could see no reason for it; so, recollecting about Mr. Kirkwood, she said, "Sit doon a minute, an' I'll tell ye a farce that happen't the day."

She then told about the potato-soup, and said, "You that ken's a' the folk in the country-side, can ye tell me onything about that Mr. Kirkwood? He's been lang abroad, about India or some o' thae places."

Dan, who was now a little quieter, sat down and said, "That'll be him that's bocht 'Strathgowan.' I've seen him. He has some braw dougs: he has a mastiff that I think could fecht ma Burke, an' *he's* no' easy bate."

"By the bye," said Bell, "he was speirin' about Mrs. Barrie's father." Bell said this *without thinking*, and Dan again started to his feet.

"I beg your pardon, Dan, but what makes ye sae wild when I speak o' auld Mr. Gordon? There's naebody here that ye need care for, an' there's something on yer mind, but I canna contrive what it is. Whatever is't, Dan?" said Bell, and she tried all the kitchen doors, to show him that they were closely shut; then she

added, "Sit doon, Dan, an' gather yersel a wee, for I promised to the mistress to speak to you about Mr. Kirkwood."

Dan swithered and writhed about a little, fixed his single eye on the kitchen door, twirled his bonnet in his hands, but at last he sat down, and looked thoughtfully in the fire.

"That's wiselike, Dan ; that's like yersel', Dan," said Bell encouragingly ; " they say that ye were the best watcher o' a kirkyard in the county, and ye're no' gaun to start at naething. Weel, as I was saying, this Mr. Kirkwood was here the day, for to obleege some Cornel Gordon that's come hame frae India, and that wants to ken about the Gordons o' the Grainaries, an' if Mrs. Barrie was ane o' them."

Dan, still looking at the fire, said, " Div you ken a' thing about Mr. Gordon ? I never kent till this moment he was Mrs. Barrie's father."

I stated in my first chapter that Mrs. Barrie never referred to her father's changed circumstances, and had asked Bell never to speak of them in Blinkbonny, so that Dan's question was a poser. She took a very red face, and said, " A'thing, Dan ? a'thing ? " then going nearer him she whispered, " I ken about the brandy, an' tobacco, an' salt, an' as I see you ken tae, we can speak freely about it ; but mind never breathe the

thing to ony ither mortal whatsomever about Blinkbonny."

"But," said Dan, "did ye ever ken wha put the brandy an' things there?"

"No," said Bell, "not me; how could I? It never was ken'd, an' likely never will be ken'd."

"Bell," said Dan, looking steadily in her face, "I ken, I ken a' about it, but there's no anither livin' man that I ken o' kens that bit o't but mysel'; an' Bell, for your life dinna tell onybody that I tell'd ye. Never let on to leevin' about it."

There was a long pause. Bell was thinking the matter over, and had more than once been asked by Dan to promise never to "breathe the thing." At length she said solemnly, "I'll never mention your name unless I'm sure it's to benefit Mrs. Barrie; but she said something about a brother that this Cornel Gordon had, that had been a wild man in his young days, and that he had written to the Cornel that if ever he had it in his power he was to mind Mr. Gordon o' the Grainaries, for this brither hadna dune fair someway wi' him. I think I understand it a' noo. This brither's been ane o' them that hid the smuggled goods in Mr. Gordon's cellar,—ane o' them that the excisemen just missed by their boat 'whummlin' [i.e. capsizing] at the milkin' stane, an' the smugglers got a' safe away; an'



DUMBARTON CASTLE. (*Page 197*).

although the judges kent fine that worthy Mr. Gordon wasna to blame, and didna pit him in the jail, the excise office wadna forgi'e a farden o' the fine, and puir Mr. Gordon was a harried, ruined man wi' it an' the law expenses, an' the trial, an' the scandal o' the thing. The folk said that it was a cousin o' his, that they used to ca' 'the Duke o' Gordon' for a nickname, that put the brandy an' stuff in the grainaries, for he kent the place fine, but he never could be laid hands on after. I see't a' noo."

Dan remained silent for some time, then said, "Ye may say that, Bell; ye ken'd a' noo,—a' but one thing, an' that is (but for your life dinna come ower't), I helpit to row the boat that the 'Duke' escapit in."

Bell's mind was still considering the matter. "I wonder," said she, speaking to herself, "if this Cornel Gordon is a brother o' the 'duke's,' as they ca'd him? an' if he's no marriet an' rich? an' if he means to mak' up for his brither's ill usage o' the auld folk by giein' a' his siller to Mrs. Barrie? If I thocht that, I would gi'e Mr. Kirkwood something that wad astonish him mair than the tattie-soup. D'ye ken, Dan, that I'm upliftit, fair upliftit—it looks that like the thing?"

Bell's glee communicated itself to Dan. "If that was to be the way o't," said Dan, "noo that the thing is lang past an' gane, an' they surely canna meddle

me for only rowin' a boat" (Dan, Dan, only? well, let it pass), "I nicht tell the 'duke's' brither what *I* kent; but he's a cornel, an' thae sodgers are terrible ill at the smugglers."

Bell and Dan agreed to say "nothing to nobody" on the subject, until they were quite sure that they could forward Mrs. Barrie's interest by doing so; and although some time elapsed before an opportunity occurred of clearing this affair up, the maintenance of strict secrecy was enforced by Dan on every occasion on which he saw Bell, by a significant motion of his arm, accompanied by, "Mind yon, Bell—Eh, Bell, mind yon!"

While Bell went about her work as heretofore, there was a strong undercurrent of thought constantly winding itself round Dan's connection with Mrs. Barrie's father's misfortunes, or round Mr. Kirkwood and Colonel Gordon, and they got all mixed up, until she was quite in a maze. Many a time did she lay down the stocking she was knitting, and sit idle, thinking the matter over and over; but somehow she could never think it out, it only got more twisted and ravelled. Many a time after such a "brown study" did she rouse herself with an impatient gesture, and resume her knitting, saying almost angrily, "This is ridic'lus. I'm fair donnert [stupid]; I'll gi'e ower thinkin' about it."

Many a sleepless hour it caused her, and as her first call in the morning was paid to Daisy, she unburthened her mind to the unconcerned cow.

“Daisy,” she would say, “my pretty lady, I’m fair bamboozled [utterly confused]. I’ve hardly sleepit a wink the nicht; that mixty-maxty business o’ Dan an’ the Grainaries an’ the Cornel has been bizz-bizzing [hum-humming] in my head. If I could but see Cornel Gordon his lane [alone] I could pit it a’ richt; for ye see, Daisy, James is a big laddie noo, an’ he wants to be a minister, an’ that tak’s a heap o’ siller; an’ Mary’s gettin’ a big lassie, an’ needin’ music lessons; for ye ken, Daisy, a’ young folk, espesh’ly a’ young women folk, should get some music putten into them. Then there’s Lewie, he’s in Latin a’ready; and Flora, she’s in the tenpenny book; an’ wee Gordie.—’Deed he’s no’ that wee, but I like to ca’ him wee when he disna hear me.—He’s gotten on the kilt, an’ he’ll no’ be lang before he’s upsides wi’ Flora at the schule [school], for he’s gaun to be a grand scholar. He’s a feckfu’ [very spirited] laddie, Gordie; he’ll show them a’ a dance yet. An’ what bothers [troubles] me, Daisy, is whare’s the siller to come frae? If I could just hae a quiet crack wi’ the Cornel, I think I could let him ken hoo he could do a great deal o’ gude wi’ his siller; for ye ken, Daisy, a’ the auld men that comes

hame frae India for guid an' a' bring wi' them bow-sackfu's [large sacks full] o' siller."

It is difficult to transcribe intelligently Bell's conversations with Daisy—they were conveyed in the very broadest Scotch. I can only account for this on the ground that Daisy was not only a patient listener, and never asked the meaning of any unusual word or phrase, but that she was also of the very best and purest Ayrshire breed, and was therefore sure to prefer the native Doric of the land of Burns.

Bell was sorely tempted to open her mind to Mrs. Barrie on this subject, but it was the one topic Mrs. Barrie had strictly enjoined her *never* to allude to. During her first year's service in Mrs. Barrie's, Bell had once or twice unwittingly made some references to it, and these had been the only occasions on which Mrs. Barrie showed temper towards her. The manifestation of unutterable abhorrence which these provoked made Bell so studiously avoid everything that had the slightest chance of recalling it, that neither in Mrs. Barrie's hearing, nor in her conversation with others, did she ever speak of Dumbarton or her early association with it; and this may account for Dan's astonishment at hearing her refer to the "milking stone."

A strong interest in the Barrie family took hold of

Dan, and although he had few opportunities of showing it, he hit on one, the most unlikely, considering the kind of man he was, that could almost be conceived, but one which went as directly to their hearts as it did credit to Dan's.

When Bell paid her early spring visit to Nellie's grave, to "sort" it after the winter's storms, carrying with her the first bunch of snowdrops, for which she had watched anxiously, she was surprised to find that some fresh plants were blooming there already.

She asked Guy if he had done this. He had not. When she got home she asked all the inmates of Knowe Park if they had planted them;—they had not. She ran over in her mind every likely person, and asked as many as she came into contact with. All answered, No. It was only after getting Guy to watch very strictly, for other flowers had been added besides those she saw first, that she found out that it had been done by Dan.

Bell was amazed. "O' a' the folk in the world, Dan was the last onybody wad a' thocht on. Mr. and Mrs. Barrie could never guess him. There's mair gude in the craitur than ever I thocht. I like Dan. Noo when I think on't, I'm awfu' glad that it was Dan."

As soon as Mr. Barrie heard of it, he called at Dan's house. This was the first time a minister had

ever been in it. Dan was a reckless, brave man, utterly indifferent about religion, and when he saw Mr. Barrie enter his house he got very uncomfortable—he felt the power of at least the presence of goodness, and what conscience he had waxed warm within him.

Mr. Barrie saw this, and knowing the way to Dan's heart, began first to talk of his dog, then of his ferrets, until Dan felt more at ease, and even offered to give Mr. Barrie a young bull-dog, which Dan thus described :

“He's pure bred, an' the vera picture o' Burke there ; an' his mither, auld Nancie that's noo deid an' gane, was the finest o' her kind in Britain.”

“Then you miss old Nancie, Dan?”

“Miss her! *miss her*, Mr. Barrie!” said Dan, now quite at his ease; “I can hardly get ower her death.”

“Dan,” said Mr. Barrie, grasping his horny and by no means clean hand, “I loved my wee Nellie; and Mrs. Barrie and all of us thank you.” Here Dan started and said, “Oh!” but Mr. Barrie still pressed his hand and spoke on. “Yes, Dan, and we love you for loving her; and, Dan, wee Nellie would like to meet you in heaven to thank you herself.”

Here Dan started and said, “Me in heaven, Mr. Barrie! me in heaven—that's what she'll never see.”

"Why, Dan, why? Nellie's Saviour wishes you—yes, *you*—to get there, and the angels would sing a loud welcome over you; for as truly as you miss your Nancie, or we loved Nellie, as certainly as Burke likes you to make of him, so true is it that our Heavenly Father wants you to come to Him; just as you are—wild, careless, sinful, bad as you think your life has been. There's a kind friend up there," said Mr. Barrie, pointing upwards, "has commanded me to tell you this good news to-day. Believe it, Dan—believe it."

Dan was unable to say more than, "Is that a fact? Sent you to tell me that? I can hardly think that can possibly be—an' yet you're a man o' your word; but it's no' easy believin't."

On the floor of the dirty cottage the two knelt down, and so simple were Mr. Barrie's words, and so single was his heart, that it may safely be said they prayed together.

Mr. Barrie handed Dan half a pound of tobacco, although he had very great difficulty in persuading him to accept it; Dan was almost stubborn in his refusal. Mr. Barrie, however, got him to take it, and just before leaving kindly advised him to pray for himself;—"just plain words—only say what you think, and ask whatever you feel you need, but be sure and do it at once."

Dan said nothing,—it was all strange to him,—but when Mr. Barrie went away, he thought over it, and smoked over it, and ultimately resolved to have a crack with Bell about it, for she could understand him better. And many a chat they had, but Dan could not be persuaded to go to the Free Church.

“I micht try the ‘auld kirk,’ it was mair the puir folk’s kirk, for they tell me that they’re awfu’ folk for seekin’ siller in the Free Kirk; an’ I’ve kent Mr. Walker langest, an’ he’s a hamely kind o’ man—but we’ll see.”

So will we in an early chapter.

CHAPTER X.

INCIDENTS IN BLINKBONNY.

“Oh! many a shaft at random sent
Finds mark the archer little meant!
And many a word at random spoken
May soothe or wound a heart that's broken.”
Sir Walter Scott.

THE energy of the Free Church had been a subject of special dislike to Miss Park; and when she heard that Mr. Barrie called on Dan, and that Bell, for whom before the Disruption she had a great respect, was on such intimate terms with him that she actually allowed him to sit in her kitchen, and even tried to make a Free Churchman of him, she was exceedingly bitter in her remarks on the subject.

One day Mr. Walker chanced to call, and she expatiated to him on the burning shame she felt at such ongoing.

“The Free Church folks must be hard up for supporters when they have to go to such a worthless vagabond and try to make a Christian of him. It's a

disgrace, a scandal—it's sacrilege!" and much to the same effect.

Mr. Walker not only did not sympathize with her, but spoke very firmly to her for thus traducing the very first principles of Christian charity, and said that the "plucking of such brands from the burning was the grandest work the Church could undertake."

"Then why did *you* not do it?" said Miss Park.

Mr. Walker pled guilty to having been remiss in discharging such duties, but said that he would try to amend, and that he would see Dan soon.

He told her that it was not an easy matter to meet every case. "For instance," said he, "I was calling a fortnight ago on a man; he said he was in great distress, both of mind and body, 'just real ill—just real, real ill, every way, temporally and spiritually—a' wrang, body and the ither way; an' to add to my troubles, my landlord—the sweep o'er there—has warned me out o' his house, for altho' I aye paid him his rent, plack an' farthin', when I was weel, I've fa'en behind this half-year, an' I'm just fair despairin', just awfu' bad.' I advised him to cast all his cares, of every kind, temporal and spiritual, cares of mind, cares of body, cares of estate, on his Maker, and ask His guidance.

"I have just now returned from visiting him, and to-day I found him in grand spirits, although not, in my opinion, so much improved in health as to account for his being so very cheerful. 'Well,' said I, 'how do you feel to-day?' 'Eh, sir!' said he, 'yon was a grand advice ye gied me a fortnight ago, just an awfu' grand advice. When you went out I just did as you told me: I cast a' my care o' a' kinds, baith for this world an' the next, a' my care about mysel' an' fam'ly, indeed a'thing, where ye tell'd me; and,' he added, with a very hearty voice, jerking his thumb in the direction of his landlord's house, 'eh, man! *the sweep's deid*; he'll no' bother me again. So, ye see, it's a grand thing to tak' gude advice; an' hasna' Providence been kind, kind?' "

I can recall a visit I paid to a widow shortly after her husband's death. He was a well-informed, active, abstemious man, but had a very violent temper, and was more easily put into a towering passion than any man I ever knew. On the slightest provocation, often on none, he would say the snellest [most biting], sharpest things. He was a fireside theologian, well read in the old divines, and an extreme Calvinist, for he came of a Cameronian stock, and was a Pharisee of the Pharisees as touching every jot and tittle of church law and form.

I knew the household well, and whenever I appeared, Mrs. Gray welcomed me. She was a quiet, industrious body, and had been to him a good wife under very difficult circumstances. She had got through with her work amongst her cows for the night, but had still on the rough worsted apron of nappy homespun wool, called a "brat." She told me familiarly to take a chair, and sat down herself in an old high-backed arm-chair, which stood close to the chimney cheek. There were two or three cushions on it, highest at the back: it looked an uncomfortable seat, but it enabled her to rest her feet on the floor, so that her posture was half leaning backwards and half sitting. She filled her pipe, for smoking was not unknown amongst the women-folks round Blinkbonny, but instead of lighting it by a spunk, she pushed it into the "ribs" of the kitchen fire, and left it there for a second or two. Whilst she was preparing for her favourite "weakness," I referred to her late husband as mildly as I could, speaking of his infirmity of temper as now no more to him, as it really had been a source of "great tribulation."

She withdrew the pipe from the fire, and put it in her mouth. Some burning sparks were now and again falling from it on to her brat, but this did not seem to annoy her, she "dichtit" [wiped] them quietly down

her sloping figure, and said after a few “draws,” “’Deed ay, it just shows ye”—here she took a few more draws in silence—“that the grace o’ God will bide wi’ a man that nae ither body can bide wi’,”—another silent draw or two,—“for I haena the slichtest doubt but that Tammas is in heaven;” some strong draws followed, as the profuse smoke testified,—“*but* he was ill to thole [put up with] here. I had my ain adaes [to do] wi’ him, for he was just a very passionate man; but ae part o’ the white robe he has on noo will be the speerit o’ meekness.”

An elder in one of the Blinkbonny churches was a very reserved, silent man, almost afraid to hear the sound of his own voice. He was an undertaker, and was on one occasion employed at a funeral. The company had met, but the minister did not turn up,—a very unusual thing, for clergymen are most attentive on such occasions.—(His absence was caused by the breaking down of a gig when he was on the way.) The father of the dead child whispered quietly into the undertaker’s ear:

“Just pit up a prayer yersel’, Mr. Sommerville, if you please.”

“Eh!” said the worthy man; “no—eh—no—oh, dinna, dinna ask me; no, I canna!”

After waiting another quarter of an hour, during which the elder was in a state of great nervous excitement, the father again came to him, but the elder beckoned him to come out of the room. When both were outside, the father said :

“Eh, Mr. Sommerville, the wife, puir bodie, canna bear to let her wee Tammie be ‘liftit’ without a bit word o’ prayer ; an’ she hasna gotten to the kirk since Tammie turned badly, an’ she’ll be the better, an we’ll a’ be the better, o’ a bit prayer. It’s awfu’ heathen-like to tak’ awa’ the bit bairn for gude an’ a’ out o’ it’s mother’s house without a word o’ comfort ; dinna refuse us—we’re a’ kent [known] folk here.”

Mr. Sommerville, who was twitching his fingers until the father had finished, said : “ Oh ! for ony favour dinna ask me,—I positeevly cannot do’t in company ;” then taking the father’s hand he pulled him near him, and said with great earnestness : “ I wad rather gi’e the *coffin* for *naething*. Oh ! ask the new schoolmaster.”

This was a young teacher who had lately come to Blinkbonny, and although he was taken aback, he engaged shortly in prayer. All present were much pleased, said that he was an uncommonly nice lad, very obliging, and that anybody could see by his prayer that “ the root o’ the matter was in him.”

It may seem strange to add that Mr. Sommerville

was a first-rate elder; he was charitable, considerate, upright, and helpful to many. His advices were short, but very "pat:" to the rash, it was, "Leisure a wee;" to the foolish, "Mend your ways;" to the intemperate, "Do thyself no harm;" to his apprentices or workmen when they committed mistakes, his reproofs were not rebukes, far less reproaches, but, "It's a pity," "Ye've gane wrang," "That's no' wiselike;" the most severe was, "That's very stupid-like."

Mr. Tait, the young schoolmaster above referred to, had succeeded the good old man who had been parish teacher for nearly half a century. He was selected from a list of applicants owing to the excellent testimonials he presented, and had been asked to meet with the examination committee in Mr. Walker's house before the appointment was finally made. He had acted for some time as assistant in a parish school adjoining Middlemoor, and was well known to Mr. Walker. Report said he was "after" a niece of Mr. Walker's.

Mr. Tait on the day of meeting was shown into the parlour beside Mrs. Walker, the committee being in the study. He told Mrs. Walker how nervous he was, and he looked it. She told him not to be afraid—she would help him through. There was a roast of beef at the kitchen fire, which she made the servant carry

through the lobby, and slowly past the door of the study; when the fragrant steam got diffused, she opened the study door, and said, "Mr. Tait's here."

The other business that had occupied the committee was very quickly despatched. Mr. Tait was called in, and Mr. Walker was telling the committee what he knew of Mr. Tait's abilities and scholarship, when Mrs. Walker, after the servant had again carried the hissing roast through the lobby, half opened the study door, and gave a nod to Mr. Walker. This, along with the appeal to the lower nature through the sense of smell, proved irresistible. The gentleman who had been deputed to examine the applicant did so with such haste, and put such childish questions, that everybody saw it was a joke, for he rattled off questions and answers as quickly as he could. Mr. Tait never needed to utter a word.

Arithmetic,—said he. *Ques.* How many are six and four?—*Ans.* Ten, to be sure; that will do for that.

History.—*Ques.* Who gave the king the most practical lessons?—*Ans.* George Buchanan; right again.

Geography.—*Ques.* What is the largest town in the world? *Ans.* Why, Biggar of course—London's a big town, but Biggar's Biggar.

Mathematics.—*Ques.* What is a simple equation ?
Ans. Six and half-a-dozen.

Latin.—*Ques.* What is the Latin for Fish ? *Ans.* *Aqua vitæ*, or “Glenlivat.” *Ques.* Translate *Ex nihilo nihil fit* ? *Ans.* It’s time we had something.

General Knowledge.—*Ques.* What’s the best change for a wearied teacher ? *Ans.* Hill air, for it always makes him hilarious.

Literature.—*Ques.* What did John Gilpin’s wife say to him, and what did he reply ?

Ans. “The dinner waits, and we are tired ;”
Says Gilpin, “So am I.”

The examination was declared satisfactory. Mr. Tait was appointed schoolmaster of Blinkbonny. The merry company sought the dining-room, did ample justice to Mrs. Walker’s hospitality, and drank Mr. Tait’s good health and great success to him after that toast had been proposed by Mr. Walker, who, in doing so, spoke a good deal of Mr. Tait’s uncle, David Tait of Blackbrae in this parish, who will reappear more prominently amongst the future “Bits.”

My brother-in-law, the Rev. John Macnab, had come out with the Free Church, and was assisting Mr. Barrie at a communion season. The sermon he preached in the evening was a most carefully prepared one ; his subject was “Heaven ;” and as I do not wish

to give an opinion of my relative's abilities, I may say that three of the elders said it was "most beautiful,—it was like a series of dissolving views." It was a long sermon, and the descriptive part of it took up so much time that there was no "application" part in it.

Old George Brown was, as he had often been on similar occasions, my guest for the "preachin's," as the services at communion seasons were called; and in these days they were abundant in number, being two sermons on Thursday, one on Saturday, and at least one on Monday, besides from about eleven to four and an evening service on Sabbath.

When we got home, George astonished Mr. Macnab by the amount of the day's services he could repeat; and when he had given his *résumé* of the evening sermon, he finished up with:

"It was really a grand sermon as far as it went. I never enjoyed a description of heaven better. Ye told us a'thing aboot heaven except *hoo to get there*; and, Maister Macnab, you'll excuse me, my young friend, for sayin' that that shouldna' hae been left out, for ye'll admit yersel' if that's awantin' a's awantin'. Ye'll mind o' the king's son's feast? The servants didna only tell that a'thing was ready, but they compelled them to come in."

Mr. Macnab said to me that night as we sat together after every other body had retired : " I've been criticized by learned professors and doctors of divinity, by ministers of experience and ability, by fellow-students and relatives, but that good old man has given me more insight into what preaching should be than all the others put together ; and I hope that as long as I live I will never, never, when delivering God's message to my fellow-men, forget to tell them ' how to get there.' "

George " got there " before another communion season came round, and with him were buried many sayings that were " like apples of gold in pictures of silver." Those I have tried to reproduce will remind many men who are now far on in the journey of life of the frequent use of Scripture language and metaphor by the men of two or three generations ago. A tall man was a " Saul among the people ;" news were carried " from Dan to Beersheba ;" a disagreeable man was " a Mordecai at the gate ;" and language which was in any way approaching profanity,—and the standard was a rigorous one,—was styled " part in the speech of Ashdod, and part in the Jews' language." Single names were also used, and to many they were most expressive, such as an " Achan," a " Jezebel," a " Nathaniel," a " Goshen," an " Ishmael."

I have heard a keen politician, during the course of the election of a member of Parliament (in the days of open voting, before the "ballot" was introduced, when the hourly returns of the voting at the various polling stations were made, and transmitted by swift riders from one to another), as the numbers were summed up, ask, in order to know the state of the poll, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" I have also heard a very worthy elder say in the presence of a very worthy minister, "Mary, bring out Jeroboam." Mary produced the whisky bottle. My teetotal friends will doubtless think this a most appropriate name.

Mrs. Barrie had been so pleased with Dan's attention to Nellie's grave, that she laid aside the first suit of clothes Mr. Barrie cast off (I may as well tell that Bell and she between them had "turned" them), and she was debating with herself whether to go to his house with them, or send for him, when she met him at the manse gate. With considerable difficulty she prevailed on him to come up to the house, but could not induce him to come on to the front approach, much less in by the front door.

"I'll stand here, if you please, mem," said Dan.

"But I wish to speak with you in the house, Mr. Corbett, if you please," said Mrs. Barrie.

Dan grinned from ear to ear at "Mr." Corbett; he did not remember of ever having been called that before, and he kept repeating, "Maister,—Maister, if you please — Eh, Dan, ye'll dae now," laughing heartily either to or at himself. Dan seldom laughed—it was almost a new sensation to him; but the "Maister, if you please," tickled him immensely, and by the time Bell had got the kitchen door open, for she saw him halt before the window, and slap his leg, and laugh until even the blind eye opened and yielded copious tears (so she said), he was in a social, happy glow.

"What's ta'en ye the day, Dan? what grand news hae ye gotten? have ye seen the Cornel?"

Dan could not reply, but brushed past Bell, and said when he settled a little:

"It's naething at a', Bell—it's fair silliness o' me; but Mrs. Barrie met me at the road end and said," here he fell a-laughing again,—"'Maister Corbett, if you please.' I'm no' used wi' such genty manners, an' like mony anither fule I was laughin' at mysel'."

Mrs. Barrie came into the kitchen, and he laughed when she again called him "Mr. Corbett," and said: "Ca' me Dan, if you please, mem; naebody ever ca'd me Maister a' my days afore, and it sounds very droll—*Maisterin' me.*"

“Well, Daniel, then !” said Mrs. Barrie.

“Dan, if you please, mem—just plain Dan.”

“Well, Dan !”

“Ay, that’s liker the thing,” said he.

And Mrs. Barrie spoke very nicely to him ; her silver tones touched his ear like music, and her words reached his heart as she thanked him for what he had so beautifully done at wee Nellie’s grave ; and she prevailed on him to come into the dining-room to see a miniature of her Nellie that a friend had painted from memory, and presented to her. There were other pictures on the walls, mostly engravings, which Mrs. Barrie explained so neatly, and with so much animation and clearness, that Dan forgot himself in listening to her, and when she had gone round the room he asked :

“What did ye say about this ane, if you please, mem ? I think ye called it the Angel’s Whisper ?”

When she re-described it, he asked about another and another. All the engravings were on suggestive subjects, and Mrs. Barrie made them doubly interesting by her explanations ; and almost unconsciously to herself, she kept dropping into his weary heart simple loving words of truth and peace as poor Dan turned from one picture to another, and Mrs. Barrie followed up her description with increasing

interest to herself as well as to Dan. She also gave him the clothes, and very sweetly counselled him to go to the church, any church he liked, and he would hear some fine pictures.

"There's nane in the Blinkbonny kirks that I ever heard o', unless it be yon marble image on young Captain M'Lellan's headstane at the side o' the auld kirk pulpit; an' I aye said to Guy's gude-faither, auld Ritchie, that it was daftlike to hae guns and bayonets an' swords stuck up like stooky [stucco] images in a kirk. But I dinna ken what to do wi' thae fine claes [clothes]; they're no' the least like me."

Dan, however, accepted them at length with a very proper bow, if lowness is any criterion, took another look of Nellie's miniature, and made several bows to Mrs. Barrie as he left the dining-room.

His description of the pictures gave Bell great delight, and she dropped in a useful word or hint now and again as he went on. Dan ended with :

"Bell, yon picture o' wee Nellie let's me ken her noo, an' I will keep her grave snod; an' there's yon ane about the angel's whisper, an' anither ane I maun ask ye to let me see again some day. D'ye ken if Mrs. Barrie wad haud [hold] the kirk in the dinin'-room, an' gang o'er yon pictures, she wad beat a' the ministers ever I heard" ("No very mony, after a'," thought

Dan to himself, "mair's the pity"). "What for do they no' hae pictures in the kirk, an' tell ye' about them, like Mrs. Barrie? I think they wad soon fill their kirks if they did that."

Dan tried on the clothes as soon as he got home, and he scarcely knew himself. His first remark was, "Guy, mind yersel', or I'll rin ye hard for the beadle-ship!" His next, looking at his hands, "They's no like thae claes." He then took down his fishing-rod, took his towel with him (it was a ragged old potato bag), bought a bit of soap as he passed through the village, sought out a quiet pool, and made himself as clean as soap, water, and a rough towel could make him. After this was over, "Ah, but I'm the better o' that; I'll do't oftener," said he, and put up his fishing-rod. The best of the fish he caught were put under Knowe Park "bass" as formerly, long after night had fairly settled down. Dan started next day to clean his house. Some corners needed it very badly. He did the cleaning very well considering.

He had a strange dream the night after he had seen the pictures, and after thinking over it and wondering about it for nearly a week, he was driven to tell it to Bell for peace' sake, as follows:

"I thocht I was in heaven, an' about the first body I met was wee Nellie. I didna ken her at first, but

she kent me, an' she was that glad to see me; an' somehow I wasna the least feared. An' she asked me if I would come an' see her mansion, an' she took me into a beautiful room, an'—but I couldna lay'd off till ye, so I'll no try't—an' I asked her wha gied her't, an' I never saw onything as bonnie as her face, or heard onything as sweet as her voice, as she said, 'Jesus! O Dan, come away an' see Him!' 'No,' said I, 'Nellie; He's no' for the like o' me.' If ye had seen her face when she said, 'But He is, Dan, He is; He likes you better than a' the gold in a' the world.' Then she said, 'I'll let ye see mamma's mansion.' It was as bonnie as Nellie's, but it was a' hung round wi' pictures, an' Mrs. Barrie was in them a', an' aye some ither wi' her—whiles ane, Nellie, or maybe Mr. Barrie, an' whiles folk I ken, besides folk I dinna ken; but she was aye in the middle o' the picture. An' there was ane wi' mysel' an' her in't, an' it was something like the 'Angel's Whisper,'—but the angels were awfu' like her tae.

"An' Nellie showed me your mansion, Bell, an' it was braw, an' fu' o' bonnie pictures just like Mrs. Barrie's; an' I was in some o' them tae. An' I noticed that ye had on your everyday working claes—your very commonest, and hardly ever on your Sabbath claes at a'.

"Weel, Nellie said to me, 'Come an' see your

mansion, Dan.' I was kind o' terrified, but she could mak' me do anything she likit. Weel, we went to what she ca'd my mansion, an' the pictures round it were fearsome to look at, an' I was in the middle o' every ane; an' there was ane where there were angels very like Mrs. Barrie, an' Mr. Barrie, an' you, speaking to me, an' lookin' at me, an' pointin' up,—an' I lookit up.

"I was sae much ta'en up wi' the pictures, I didna notice that Nellie had gaen out; but when I saw Mrs. Barrie an' you pointin' up in the picture, I lookit up, an' in a moment Nellie comes in an' says, 'Here's Jesus;' an' all at once the pictures vanished, an' the walls were as clean an' white as the driven snaw, an' there was only one picture left, an' that was Jesus. An' somehow He didna fear me till He cam' out o' the picture an' showed me His hands, an' there were marks in the very middle o' them, like as if nails had once been driven through them; an' he was gaun to lay His hands on me when I wakened;—and it's been in my head ever since, but I didna like to tell aboot it. D'ye think it means that I shouldna wear yon fine claes? or what d'ye think?"

Need I say that Bell was greatly struck with the dream, and did what she could to press home the lesson it so clearly taught? But Dan said, "Oh, but,

Bell, mind He didna lay hands on me; but that was maybe my blame, for I started back. But I'm glad I've tell't you, an' ye can tell Mrs. Barrie if you like."

Bell did so. And although Dan was not much changed outwardly, he liked to speak to Bell about good things, and gave over sundry bad habits, and went to Mr. Walker's kirk; although, poor man, he knew so little about the service, that when Mr. Walker said at the end of his sermon, "I will conclude by," Dan set off, supposing that all would follow very soon, and he was astonished to find that the folk took so long to come home from the church that day. Generally his wonder had been, "Are they oot a'ready?" as Sunday forenoon had been a great day for Watty and his cronies meeting in Dan's house and garden for a crack on bull-dogs, game-cocks, and sporting matters. But they paid this respect to religion, that they did not start for Dan's until the church was "in," and left so as to be home before the church was out.

Dan gave up keeping game fowls, but stuck to his other favourites, and became a quieter man; but I will not enter further into his state of mind than say that. I believe he attended the parish church, and I was told that some time after the dream, but I cannot say as to the precise date, he tried to put himself in the way of Mr. Scott of Babbie's Mill.

Mr. Scott stared to see Dan, and spoke rudely to him. Dan waited till he was done, and then said, "Mr. Scott, there's a slap in your hedge, an' the sheep's among the corn. I've driven them out, and stappit [pushed] in a bush, but if ye've ony stabs or palings I'll mend it for ye in a crack."

"I want nane o' yer mendings."

"Aweel," said Dan, "I see ye're angry; and I can only say, Mr. Scott, if ye'll no' be friends, dinna blame me. I own I spoke sair till ye, but was you no' first in the fault? I'm no' seeking onything frae ye, but as I'm an auld man I want to die in peace wi' my neibours, so I ax yer pardon, and gude day."

"Die in peace!—ye'll die in a jail, or no' unlikely on a gallows!" said the miller.

"Maybe," said Dan, "but Mr. Walker was tellin' us on Sabbath about a deein' thief, an' he was made a' richt as he was deein'; an' maybe Him that helpit him will help me."

"Dan," said the miller in astonishment, "are you gaun to the kirk noo?"

"Ay," said Dan,— "whiles."

"Weel, Dan, ye seem to make a better use o' the kirk than I dae; and as ye was saying, we'll let by-ganes be by-ganes. And thank ye about the sheep."

"Aweel," replied Dan, "Mr. Walker whiles speaks

about lost sheep, and I thocht as I saw yours amang the corn, that the sooner our slaps [gaps] are filled up the better for ourselves and for the sheep, for some o' them seemed *swalled* [swollen].”

The miller and Dan started with the requisites, mended the slap, looked at the sheep, smoked a quiet pipe, and parted.

“That coves [beats] a’,” said the miller.

“The canny way’s the best way, after a’,” said Dan.

Colonel Gordon was spending part of the summer with Mr. Kirkwood, and they called at Knowe Park. The Colonel’s relationship to Mrs. Barrie was clearly established; and a piano, and some other marks of kindness on the Colonel’s part, were sent from Edinburgh shortly thereafter. But unfortunately Bell was not in when the gentlemen called, greatly to Mr. Kirkwood’s regret, and their visit had been a short one.

Colonel Gordon was in indifferent health, and Mr. Kirkwood would not allow him to exert or excite himself in any way, so that Bell’s “castle in the air” was as hazy as ever; and as neither Mr. nor Mrs. Barrie had thought much on the matter, the presents were taken as tokens of goodwill, and politely acknowledged as such, but they formed no ground in their minds of any, far less of such great expectations as they did in Bell’s.

The social element in religion was greatly promoted by the soirees and meetings of that nature held in connection with the Free Church. Mr. Barrie used to tell of Mr. Taylor's usual welcome when he dropped in of an evening: "Come away, Mr. Barrie, ye'll spend an hour wi' us. There's a great deal o' religion in sociality, an' there's far ower little sociality in our religion—for that's what I think is the 'communion of saints,' it's just sociality—gude neibourship, as far as our firesides are concerned."

At one of our soirees—I think it was in 1850—Sir John M'Lelland suddenly appeared in the Free Church lobby. Dr. Guthrie was one of the speakers, and the church was crammed. Some young men acted as ticket-collectors and stewards at the door, and they had been so anxious to lose nothing of the speeches, that they did not even look round in reply to Sir John's question, "Could you find room for me?"

"Have you a ticket?" was the reply.

"A ticket! What sort of ticket? I've no ticket," said Sir John.

"Weel, there are no bags left, and there's no room in the church, so you cannot get in."

This was said without the speaker's even turning round to see to whom he was speaking. Luckily,

one of the deacons observed Sir John, who said to him, "Can I not get in? This young man here spoke to me about some bag and ticket, and said I could not get in."

"Stupid fellow!—beg pardon!—please come this way," was the reply.

When the poor steward looked round he was so utterly ashamed of himself that he stood speechless. He "catch't it" from the other stewards, and his evening's enjoyment was spoiled.

Sir John was shown into the vestry, and when the speaker for the time had concluded, he came to the platform.

The surprise at his appearance added to the warmth of his reception. It seemed as if the audience could not cease their expressions of delight. When silence was restored, Mr. Barrie announced Dr. Guthrie as the next speaker.

Sir John instantly rose and asked to be allowed to say a few words. He first told the story of the children and Dr. Guthrie at the post-office, which made Kennedy the tailor spring first on to the seat, then stand astride on two seats, and wave his Turkey-red and white spotted cotton handkerchief so excitedly, and cheer so loudly, that he had to be taken down almost by force.

After Kennedy was quiet, Sir John said, "I spoke to Mr. Barrie and several of this audience at the time of the Disruption in a way that I now regret. My language was unguarded and unwise. I do not state my present opinions; but I then made publicly some very strong statements which I now wish as publicly to withdraw. Mr. Barrie, and hundreds of ministers besides him, acted like truly Christian heroes, and carried out their conscientious convictions in most difficult and trying circumstances. I honour them for it. But," turning to the audience, "I honour you, and those who form the membership of the Free Church of Scotland, for the noble, and liberal, and high-toned manner in which you have recognised this heroism, and carried forward so triumphantly the cause for which they contended. The Free Church is in my opinion, in Scotland, *THE event* of the century, and I can hardly conceive that a more noble testimony to principle could have been possible in any other country in the world."

Then turning to Dr. Guthrie, he asked to be excused for almost interrupting him; and to the audience for trespassing on their patience when such a speaker as Dr. Guthrie was to follow him.

Dr. Guthrie shook hands long and warmly with Sir John, and they had plenty of time; and when Dr.

Guthrie did speak, it was with a "forty parson" power. He excelled himself, enchained his audience, and that soiree is a "red-letter" day in Blinkbonny Free Church annals.

Bell said it was "awfu' splendid," — "just magnificent," — "it beat everything," — "she just couldna say what it wasna,—it was 'maist awfu', awfu' splendid!"

THE ANGEL'S WHISPER.

BY SAMUEL LOVER.

A superstition of great beauty prevails in Ireland, that when a child smiles in its sleep it is "talking with angels."

A baby was sleeping, its mother was weeping,
For her husband was far on the wild raging sea,
And the tempest was swelling round the fisherman's dwelling,
And she cried, "Dermot, darling, oh, come back to me!"

Her beads while she number'd, the baby still slumber'd,
And smiled in her face as she bended her knee;
"Oh! blest be that warning, my child, thy sleep adorning,
For I know that the angels are whispering with thee.

And while they are keeping bright watch o'er thy sleeping,
Oh! pray to them softly, my baby, with me,
And say thou wouldst rather they'd watch o'er thy father;
For I know that the angels are whispering with thee."

The dawn of the morning saw Dermot returning,
And the wife wept with joy her babe's father to see;
And closely caressing her child, with a blessing,
Said, "I knew that the angels were whispering with thee."

CHAPTER XI.

CHANGES AT KNOWE PARK.

“But mony are the ups an’ the douns o’ life,
When the dice-box o’ fate turns tapsalteerie.”
Old Song, “Kate Dalrymple.”

THE Blinkbonny Free Church congregation was now a strong one,—so strong that a Dorcas Society was added to its other schemes, and proved of great service to the members as well as to the poor. The choice of Mrs. Clark as convener was a happy one. She became the mainspring of the concern; and faithfully did she inquire into all needful cases, and considerately did she administer the funds,—in some instances so quietly, that several compared the help they received to “Peter’s sheet that was let down from heaven;” and in not a few cases the assistance was all the more welcome because, although it was greatly needed, it would only have been asked as a last resort.

The collectors had some difficulty in getting the

Dorcas Society started. One of them—a Miss Roxburgh—asked a subscription for this purpose from Mr. Skinner, a well-to-do and successful man.

“A what kind of society do you call it,—a Dorcas Society? What in all the world’s that?” said he.

“It’s to provide clothing and coals for the poor.”

“Then why do you not call it something else than that foreign name Dorcas? Is it Latin, or French, or what is it?”

“Oh,” said Miss Roxburgh, “it’s called after Dorcas, the woman that made garments for the poor. You’ll remember of her,—Tabitha or Dorcas?”

“Not I. I never even heard of her name before,—Tabby or Dorcas, or whatever you call her. Where did you fall in with her? I am certain it was not in the Bible,” said Mr. Skinner firmly.

“Hoots, ye’re forgetting,” said Miss Roxburgh. “It’s in the Acts of the Apostles. We read that she died, and they sent for Peter; and when the poor widows showed him the clothes she had made for them, he prayed, and she was brought to life again.”

“I read the Bible as well as you,” replied Mr. Skinner, “and I never either heard or read of any such woman. It’s not in the Acts, I’m certain. However, as the object is a good one, there’s a pound to you; but for any favour give your society a decent

name, for nobody will understand what Dorcas means. Dorcas! there is not such a person in all the Bible."

After the first year the society ceased to be a Free Church scheme and became a village one; but Mrs. Clark was continued at the head of it. She made it a matter of conscience,—stuck to the principle of helping nobody that had others—especially a "man"—that could work for them. The distribution of coals was to her a matter of first concern in the early winter; and, like Job, she could say, "The cause which I knew not I searched out," until the receivers came to speak of them as "Mrs. Clark's coals." I commend this "bit" to what an old elder used to call "my female brethren," and am convinced if they go and do likewise they will in no wise lose their reward.

"'Twas to share wi' the needfu' our blessin's were gi'en,
And the friend o' the puir never wanted a frien'."

Mr. Barrie had some trouble over what was known as the "Morisonian" controversy. I will not enter on the question itself. It turned on the decrees of election, predestination, and what are known as the Calvinistic doctrines.

George Hunter, a weaver, who had imbibed the Morisonian ideas, had a considerable power of putting the knotty points in a light which made the Calvinistic

theory appear very monstrous, and he thought he could easily corner Mr. Barrie. George at length got what he had anxiously longed for, viz. a chance to fire off the cleverly worded sentences he had elaborated on the subject. Mr. Barrie, in reply, quietly stated the doctrine as given in the *Confession of Faith*, and quoted the Apostle Paul as his authority.

"But that's where me an' Paul differs," said George.

"What!" said Mr. Barrie, "that's where Paul and you differ? Do you not consider the Apostle Paul as an absolute and indisputable authority?"

"Weel," said George, "hardly; for I believe that Paul was wrang when he said that."

"Paul wrong!" said Mr. Barrie. "Your faith in yourself is certainly great, but you will excuse me for preferring Paul's authority not only before yours, but to the exclusion of all others," and thus closed the interview.

In the early summer of 1851, Colonel Gordon again came to reside with Mr. Kirkwood, near Blinkbonny; and although still an invalid, he was stronger and more cheerful. He had brought with him an invalid's chair, on which he could be wheeled about, and Dan was employed to push it. When Colonel Gordon first saw Dan he took a long, inquiring look at him, as if the face was not altogether an unknown one; but he

said nothing, as he thought it likely that he must have seen him when in Blinkbonny last year. Knowe Park became the Colonel's favourite destination in his airings. This may have been at first brought about by a little management on Dan's part; but the old soldier soon grew so fond of the children, that every day when the weather admitted of his getting out, he landed there.

Bell liked the Colonel for his own sake. He was a fine type of the old Indian military man,—courteous, interesting, and still handsome despite his advanced years. Generally she had some tasty soup or other slight refreshment ready for him, which he thoroughly enjoyed; and he told Mrs. Barrie that her cook did more to make him well than the doctor.

Mr. Kirkwood often referred to Bell's potato-soup in terms which the Colonel thought absurdly high. On one of his visits, little Gordie asked him if he would like to see the new chickens. The boy's beaming face interested him, and he said,

“Certainly; will you take me to see them?”

Gordie, trained as he had been by Bell not to disturb her feathered friends, said timidly, “I think Bell would let you see them, but she'll not let me touch them.”

Bell was only too glad. Dan wheeled the Colonel to the spot near the outhouses where the “birdies”

were. It was some time before he could so far relax his old Indian notions about servants as to speak to Bell; but she was so attentive and so respectful that he gradually got into familiar conversation with her, and even referred to Mr. Kirkwood's constant praise of her potato-soup.

Bell, whilst keeping her proper distance, so thoroughly won his respect that he thanked her for the kind way in which she had studied to have something tasty for him, and complimented her on her cookery.

"I'm glad to do all in my power for Mrs. Barrie's friend," said Bell, "for she's been a kind mistress to me; an' although no' rich in one respect, she has the best o' a' kind o' riches, for she has a' Martha's briskness an' a' Mary's meekness. As to the pitattie-soup, it was just what was gaun that day; but if Maister Kirkwood wad—as he's sae fond o' Scotch dishes—come here till his dinner some day, Mr. and Mrs. Barrie wad be glad to see him wi' you, sir,—but dinna say I said it,—and I wad try to let him taste some o' the things he spoke o' the first day he was here."

"Mr. Kirkwood would be delighted, I know; he often speaks about these things,—oftener than I care about, for when he begins there's no stopping of him," said the Colonel.

“Well, sir, beggin’ your pardon for bein’ sae pre-
sumin’,” said Bell, “if ye’ll tell me what he likes best,
if it’s a plain auld Scotch dish, I’ll try to mak’ it sae
that it’ll at least bring Mr. Kirkwood in mind, as he
says, o’ auld langsyne; for a’ our denners here are
auld-fashioned hamely fare.”

“Really I could not choose for him. What do you
think would be suitable yourself? For I begin to
relish the idea of seeing him sit down to a really
Scotch dinner,—he so often speaks of it. It would
be quite a treat to me.”

“Oh,” said Bell thoughtfully, “let me see,—he’s
tried our potato-soup, but there’s ‘cockie-leekie,’ an’
green pea soup, an’ ‘hotch-potch;’ and for after that
a haggis an’ collops, or a singed sheep’s head; an’
after that pancakes, an’ rhubarb wi’ some o’ Daisy’s
cream.”

Here Bell was interrupted and almost startled by
Mr. Kirkwood’s appearance and voice. He had come
to call, but seeing the gathering at the outhouses, he
walked very quietly forward and had overheard Bell’s
last sentence.

“Cockie-leekie!” said he; “splendid! Sheep’s
head broth!—glorious! I had forgotten it. Haggis
and pancakes!—magnificent! Collops, and what more
did you say?” Then turning to Colonel Gordon,

“You laughed at me for praising the potato-soup, and here you are getting a whole catalogue of dishes. I can only say that you’re vastly better lately if you are the length of dining on such fare.”

“It was for you, Mr. Kirkwood, that I was catering, not for myself,” replied the Colonel; “and we must see Mrs. Barrie about the matter first.”

Mr. Kirkwood found occasion, on their way to the house, twice or thrice to turn round and speak to Bell (who followed at a respectful distance) about some old-fashioned dishes, until Colonel Gordon said :

“Really, Kirkwood, don’t bother my good friend with such questions. You speak as if your fortune depended on them. Don’t make so much of your lower nature.”

“It’s not that so much as old associations,” said Mr. Kirkwood; “but if you had come into a house on a cold day and got the potato-soup that I”—

“Stop, Kirkwood, please! Do stop,—I’ve heard it fifty times,” replied the Colonel.

When the gentlemen got into the dining-room, they felt at a loss how to invite *themselves*; but Gordie, on whose shoulder Colonel Gordon steadied himself when entering the house, did it for them by saying :

“Mamma, Mr. Kirkwood’s coming here to dinner

some day, and Bell is going to make pancakes and nice, nice things for *us all*."

"We'll be delighted to see you, gentlemen," said Mrs. Barrie, with a very slight bow to each, "any day that will be most convenient." Tuesday week was fixed.

Mr. Kirkwood brought with him some champagne of a special vintage, it being the only stimulant Colonel Gordon was allowed to take, and sent it quietly by Dan to Bell. She, busy with her own special work, looked at the bottles, and as she had not had champagne in hand before, she said to Dan:

"Take that gold off the cork an' that string, an' I'll draw't, an' pit it into a crystal bottle to be ready."

Alas! the cork flew into Bell's face, half the wine was spilt, and she said sharply:

"Let them draw the next that likes, I'll no' fash wi't." Thereafter Mr. Kirkwood became his own butler for the day.

He was *carried away* by the cockie-leekie, to which, at his own request, he was helped three times. Everything else, especially the pancakes, increased his delight. The others around the table enjoyed his immense satisfaction as much as they did the dinner,

which, at least in Gordie's case, is saying a very great deal.

Mr. Kirkwood walked alongside of Colonel Gordon's chair as they went homewards,—Dan, of course, acting as propeller. When they had reached a high part of the road, they halted to enjoy the scene and the cool evening air. Colonel Gordon looked at Dan, who was wiping his brow, and observing a scar on his temples, he said :

“I've surely seen you long ago ; it's like a dream to me, but was it not you that brought me a letter from my brother, many, many years since, when I was sailing for India ? You had a patch over your brow, and you told me you had had your eye hurt.”

Dan started and said : “ Please, sir, are you a brother of the Duke o' Gordon's,—toots, I beg your pardon,—Kenneth Gordon's ? ”

“ I am,” said the Colonel. “ I see now it was you that brought the letter. I was sure I knew you. Poor Kenneth, he was a daring fellow. Did you know him well ? ”

“ I was one o' his oarsmen,” said Dan, “ but I hae-na seen him since the day he gied me the letter to gi'e to you—that was the day after he hid the brandy an' the tobacco in Mr. Gordon o' the Granaries' cellar, thinkin' he could get it out next nicht ; but

the gaugers got scent o't, and it took us a' oor time to get off frae Dumbarton. It was then that I lost my e'e."

"Brandy!—tobacco!—excisemen after him!" said Colonel Gordon, evidently under great excitement. "Gordon of the Granaries' cellar!—are you in earnest? I'm perfectly stunned. On your life, tell me everything you know about this matter."

Dan did so, and pulling from the inside of his vest an old pocket-book, he showed a bit of dingy paper with some hieroglyphics on it that none but the initiated could decipher.

"Ye understand, sir, the smugglers that I rowed the boat for had lots o' hidin'-places for their stuff, an' this was one o' the books they keepit. There, now,—that anchor wi' the five twists o' rope round it, means five kegs o' brandy; that R K inside o' the rope, means Roseneath kirkyard; that's your brither's mark, B Y D and a drawing o' a 'boyn' or tub,—it was something about the Duke o' Gordon in the north country."

"Yes," said the Colonel quickly, "Bydand is part of the Gordon crest, and Aboyne their castle;—but go on."

"Weel, here's for Gordon o' the Granaries;—a castle, that's Dumbarton;—a granary wi' a G, that's Gordon's

place ; an' there's the anchor wi' five twists, an' twa tobacco-pipes made like a five ; and there's the duke's mark. An' that mark's,—beggin' your pardon, Mr. Kirkwood,—Ma'colm Kirkwood's ;—it's a comb, an' a kirk, an'—an'—” Here Dan was interrupted by Mr. Kirkwood saying warmly :

“ A gallows-tree, a wood or ‘ wuddie,’ sure enough, for hanging smugglers on. Both the entries and signatures are very suggestive.”

“ An’,” continued Dan, “ that mark o’ the half-moon on legs wi’ the wings on’t, means that the vera nicht ony o’ the ither companies o’ the gang sees’t, they’re to get the stuff awa’ to some ither place immediately, that’s markit on the paper, *if* there’s twa marks o’ the heid men on’t, like what this has, but no’ unless. An’ I got the book frae your brither, to tak’ to anither party o’ the smugglers when the hue and cry about the thing blew past. For your brither, sir, never thocht the gaugers wad find out the stuff in the granaries ; but they fand it, an’ puir Mr. Gordon had to pay the fine, an’ it ruined him ; an’ nobody kens till this day whae put it there, except mysel’—at least that I ken o’. I left the smugglers for gude an’ a’ after that.”

Dan’s story, corroborated as it was by the outlandish book of entries, completely unhinged both gentlemen.

From Mr. Kirkwood's manner, one would have guessed that the Malcolm Kirkwood had been a relative of his; but of that I can say nothing. With Colonel Gordon it was otherwise. When they reached home they got all out of Dan they could, and more than they relished, for his brother's connection with smuggling was new to the Colonel.

A painful scene took place at Knowe Park next day, when Mrs. Barrie told of her father's trial at the law, the fine, and how it not only drained his purse, but broke his heart.

Colonel Gordon now understood why his brother had written to him so urgently from his dying-bed to be kind to the Gordons of the Granaries, if ever he had the opportunity. He did all that he now could do to atone for the grievous wrong his brother had done to her father, by handing over at once a considerable portion of his means to the family at Knowe Park.

The Colonel died a few years after this, and in his will, all that he was possessed of was bequeathed to Mrs. Barrie and her family, burdened with an annuity of fifty pounds a year to Daniel Corbett, and some trifling legacies.

From the day that Dan had told the smuggling adventure, Colonel Gordon had been kind to him, and every now and again the banker sent a request to Dan

to call at the bank for money. Not even going to church put Dan more about than going to the bank; the stanchels of the windows kept his solitary eye busy, and as soon as he put his cross to the receipt, he slunk out, and took a by-road home.

Where to put the money exercised his mind sadly. He thought everybody knew he had it. At length he put it under one of the rough flags of the floor, where "Burke" lay, wrapping it well with old paper, and stuffing it thereafter into an old game-bag. The money contributed little to his personal comfort, but he occasionally helped his poorer neighbours. Bell tried to get something for the missionary cause. His answer was barely civil: "Send siller to the niggers! no' very likely!" Dan's nature was a secretive one; few could make anything of him, none much to boast of, for on all emotional subjects he was "cabined, cribbed, confined."

The Free Church of Blinkbonny heard with mingled feelings, chiefly, I must confess, composed of deep regret, that the "Wishart" church in Edinburgh had resolved to call Mr. Barrie to be their pastor. Many of us knew that he was highly appreciated in places where he occasionally preached, and that his appearances in the synods and assemblies had brought him into favourable notice; and although we had been

gratified to hear strangers express themselves as astonished that he should be allowed to remain in Blinkbonny, the idea of his really leaving us was never seriously entertained.

Colonel Gordon's unexpected gift had added very materially to Mr. Barrie's comfort, in as far as it enabled him to do more for the education of his children than the "equal dividend" of the Free Church alone could admit of; and he had tried to prevent a call from coming out in his favour.

He was, however, overborne by the urgent solicitations, not only of the Wishart congregation, but even more so by fathers and brethren in the ministry, who pressed him very closely to accept of the call to Edinburgh. Mrs. Barrie, on whose judgment he relied more implicitly than on all others put together, declined to express any opinion on this subject. She was pleased to see that her husband's gifts were appreciated, and felt that benefits to the Church, as well as to her family, were likely to result from his going to Edinburgh. But she liked Blinkbonny, and she had heard of the heavy calls and frequent worries of a city charge; and as she could not make up her mind which *she* would prefer, she remained neutral, although not at all taciturn.

Mr. Barrie and she talked the matter fully over,

looking at it on all sides, and she entered patiently and minutely into all the pros and cons, sometimes considerably to his confusion. For whilst she gave a comprehensive statement of the arguments for going and staying, she did this so evenly that it merely assisted his judgment, but it did not at all influence his decision.

About this time the "Ecclesiastical Titles Bill" was absorbing public attention, and the Churches in Scotland entered on a feverish crusade against the Church of Rome. The deputation which appeared at the presbytery to prosecute the call to Mr. Barrie dwelt largely on this subject. I have already referred to Mr. Barrie's deeply-rooted aversion to a matter of this kind. On this occasion he spoke out very strongly, much to the surprise, if not to the dissatisfaction, of the Edinburgh representatives.

He declared it was his conviction that spasmodic agitation of this kind was of no practical use. It oftener resulted in harm than good. There was much in the Romish Church which he disliked and condemned, but there was also much that he respected,—its zeal, its energy, its stand for liberty and learning in the Dark Ages, and its success in reaching the very poorest and keeping hold of them. Rank injustice was often done by ignorant tirade, or exaggerated mis-

representation of certain tenets. To enter into either an explanation or a refutation, or, worse still, a denunciation of Mariolatry, Transubstantiation, etc., to a Protestant audience was unedifying, to say the least of it. If the fiery zeal directed against Popery were applied to preaching and living the gospel, it would be better for the minister, the people, and the world; and unless he greatly changed his mind, he would not meet the wishes of the deputation in that matter. He, however, reserved his decision till next meeting of presbytery.

One reverend Edinburgh brother was present, on whom the no-Popery cry had taken an excessively firm hold; it was the only subject which warmed him up at all, but it made him furious, and formed part of every discourse he preached, until many of his hearers said, "they couldna sleep in the kirk noo;" and one of his elders affirmed that "he was aye pop-pop-poperyin' away; if he pop-poperied mickle mair, I'll no' pop back to hear him."

This deputy tried to reply to Mr. Barrie, but Mr. Taylor said "it was like a Dandie Dinmont laying about him wi' a flail on thrashed straw—plenty o' exercise an' stour, but nae wark dune; muckle cry an' little woo' [wool], as the," etc. At next meeting of presbytery Mr. Barrie accepted the call to Edinburgh.

In contemplating the Edinburgh call, it is possible to conceive that Bell might have been one of Mrs. Barrie's difficulties, for life in a town would not suit her at all. What would she do without Daisy? for so all her cows were named, prefixed in order to distinguish them by the colour of each, so that Bell had had during her stay in Blinkbonny a brown Daisy, a black Daisy, etc., and now she had a ginger Daisy. Could she do without the garden, and especially the hens? No.

But Bell had been rather a thought to Mrs. Barrie for some time past. Not that she had failed or flagged—she was as “eident” [industrious], honest, and excellent as ever; but Mrs. Barrie had observed, that after the meetings of the elders at the manse were over, David Tait of Blackbrae took the kitchen lobby, not the front door one, as the others did; and she also noticed, after this had gone on for a while, that if any of the other elders took the same road, Bell did not talk with them so much as she used to do, but found some sudden engagement outside the manse, and that David and she generally re-entered the kitchen together, as soon as the others were fairly on their way.

David had a small farm about a mile and a half from Blinkbonny. His widowed mother had died lately. He was a canny, intelligent man, in good worldly

circumstances, or, to use the Scotch phrase, “a bien man, but very blate [diffident].”

Betwixt Mrs. Barrie and Bell there were no secrets, and she often asked Bell if Mr. Tait and she were making any progress in the way of marriage. “None whatever,” was Bell’s general reply. “He’s a nice man an’ a gude cracker, but he never ‘evened’ [hinted at] marriage to me.”

One day Bell told Mrs. Barrie, with a gleeful face that belied her words, “that David had met wi’ a queer misfortune.”

“I’m sorry for that, Bell; what has happened? You seem to laugh rather than lament over it,” said Mrs. Barrie, with evident concern.

“Oh, mem, it’s a kind o’ laughable tae,” said Bell. “Last Sabbath day he was takin’ a lesson on the Bible before he cam’ to the kirk, an’ as it’s late afore he gets hame, he was eatin’ a bit piece; it was a warm mornin’, an’ he was sittin’ on a seat in front o’ his hoose. Weel, ane o’ the calves got out o’ the pen, an’ he lays down his Bible an’ his piece, an’ gangs to put in the calf. There was a soo gaun about the close [farm-court], an’ it snappit up David’s piece that was lying on the Bible; and it not only took the piece, but it ate a’ the Second Corinthians and a gude deal o’ the First. He’s very ill about it; he’s baith vexed an’ affrontit about it.”

"It was very provoking," said Mrs. Barrie; "the sooner you become mistress of Blackbrae the better."

Mrs. Barrie had hitherto spoken to Bell about David's attentions more in joke than in earnest, until she knew that Mr. Barrie had decided to go to Edinburgh; but as David's visits were becoming more frequent as well as longer, without seeming to come to anything definite, she resolved to give her two worthy friends a little help. One night, when David was in the kitchen, Mrs. Barrie went "ben" and said, after the usual courtesies had been exchanged: "Mr. Tait, I see that you are going to take Bell away to Blackbrae, reason or none, and I wish you much joy; a wife like Bell's a prize not to be got every day, and you may consider yourself lucky to have won her. I'll see about another servant to-morrow, although I never expect to get one as good as Bell. You must never think about waiting till the term. Marriages break all terms; indeed, if you both will take my advice, you will be married *very* soon."

Bell was quite unprepared for such plain speaking; her stocking wires went very fast, and she did not know where to look. Mrs. Barrie then turned to her and said:

"Bell, get everything ready as soon as ever you can, so that we may come once or twice to see you after

you are fairly settled at Blackbrae, before the long autumn nights set in." And she added, what had never been said by her before: "You need not come in to worship to-night, Bell, as you two will have a very great deal to speak about." So good night, and good speed to you both."

If they had a good deal to say, they were very long of beginning. Bell's wires went faster than ever—they actually made a clicking sound; and her heart went even faster than her wires. But David's honest heart went faster than either; he looked sideways, then downwards, and fidgeted, for his

"Heart it went dunt upon dunt,
Till he thocht every dunt it wad crack it."

At length he said, "I'm a' sweatin'," which was a mild way of putting it, for he was glowing and tingling from head to foot.

Bell looked fixedly, stolidly, at the stocking she was knitting, but she uttered not a word.

At length David summoned courage to say:

"Will Mrs. Barrie really gang after anither servant the morn, d'ye think, Bell?"

"She's a woman o' her word; she aye does what she says."

"Weel, Bell," said David with a sigh.

"Weel, David," said Bell sympathetically.



BELL'S HOUSE O'HER AIN, BLACKBRAE. (Page 250).

“What d’ye think, Bell?”

“What dae you think, David?”

“I dinna ken what to think.”

“Neither div I,” said Bell; and there was a short pause, during which the ticking of the clock seemed unusually loud, and both heads began to move to each tick.

At length David took heart:

“We’re fairly in for’t noo, Bell,” said he with a sigh; “an’ after a’, Bell, do you no’ think we micht risk it?”

“It’s a very serious business, David, very; it is.”

“It’s a’ that, very indeed; but,” he added in his most persuasive tone, “ye’ll no’ say no, Bell. The fac’ is, we daurna stop now, so we’ll just say it’s settl’t.”

“I wad need some time to think it o’er,” was the reply.

“Certainly,” said David, brightening up; “quite richt, certainly; think weel o’er’t, Bell; tak’ time, plenty o’ time to think on’t. I’ll come doun some other nicht afore lang. There’s luck in leisure, as the auld sayin’ is.”

David’s idea of plenty of time was wider than Bell’s. Every night for ten nights she had kept the kitchen, if possible, brighter, and herself “redd up;” she had also looked oftener in the looking-glass (it

was an irregular fragment of a larger one stuck on the facing of the window) during that time than she had done for twelve months before, and her cap or "mutch" was something extra even for her. As each evening fell she looked often and wistfully up the Blackbrae Road. After ten days had passed she felt a little nervous, and put herself in Dan's way, to ask him, after some leading questions, if he had been at Blackbrae lately. She had still to wait other three days as best she could, but at the fortnight's end

"The braw wooer cam' doun the lang glen."

Both were "blate." Other subjects were tried and skimmed over, but *the* subject was not broached. Had it not been for a noise in the lobby caused by Mrs. Barrie's going up-stairs, it might have lain another fortnight or more before any progress had been made; but fearing that she would come into the kitchen after she came down-stairs, David blurted out hurriedly:

"Bell, Bell, have ye been thinkin' on yon?"

"Yes, yes," said Bell, with considerable modulation of voice.

"An' I do most sincerely hope ye'll say yes," said David warmly; "I canna see for the life o' me how ever we can face Mrs. Barrie till it's a' settled."

Bell had carefully composed what she thought a proper answer, and during the fortnight she had

repeated it "a hunder" times to herself; but when it was wanted it would neither come into her head nor to her tongue. She was greatly annoyed, indeed ashamed, at herself for this, but her honest heart and her good sense came to her help, and guided by them she made a far better reply than the one she had hoarded so long and lost so suddenly; for she rose, gave David her hand, and said:

"David, there's my hand, an' my heart gang's wi't; they're baith yours," solemnly looking him straight in the face. He smiled, and then of course she smiled, and turning away her face, for she was blushing crimson, she added: "Eh, sirs, I never wad a thocht—wha ever wad a thocht o' me being marrit? David, isna the ways o' Providence strange an' mysterious?"

"'Deed ay, Bell; but arena they whiles real pleasant tae?"

"Ye may say that, David, for I've liked ye lang, an' wonder't if ever it wad come to this; an' oh, David, I CAN lippen till ye perfectly wi' a' my heart."

"That's the way to speak, Bell; that's wiselike. I'll dae my vera best to make you comfortable."

"So will I you, David—we'll baith dae our best; an' if we hae God's blessin' I think we'll dae fine."

A happier couple could not be found that night than these two, for love makes folks younger if not young.

Shortly after all was settled, David hummed rather than sung, lest he should be heard in the parlour, a favourite song of his, which, whatever we may think of its applicability to what we have hitherto known as a staid, solid woman like Bell, seemed to David “really a very bonnie sang—he was aye catchin’ himsel’ sing-singin’ at it, an’ it really was no’ far off what he thocht himsel’;” and, strange to say, douce Bell (although she said “stuff an’ nonsense” when he had finished it) turned a willing ear to the song, and nodded to herself in the looking-glass during the singing of it. If she did not apply the whole of it to herself, she evidently did not absolutely discard it all.

THE BLACK-E’ED LASSIE (BY CHARLES GRAY).

AIR—*My only jo and dearie O.*

“Wi’ heart sincere I love thee, Bell,
 But dinna ye be saucy O!
 Or a’ my love I winna tell
 To thee, my black-e’ed lassie O!
 It’s no’ thy cheeks o’ rosy hue,
 It’s no’ thy little cherry mou’,
 It’s a’ because thy heart’s sae true,
 My bonnie black-e’ed lassie O!

“It’s no’ the witch glance o’ thy e’e,
 Though few for that surpass ye O
 That mak’s ye aye sae dear to me,
 My bonnie black-e’ed lassie O!
 It’s no’ the whiteness o’ thy skin,
 It’s no’ love’s dimple on thy chin,
 It’s a’ thy modest worth within,
 My bonnie black-e’ed lassie O!

“Ye smile sae sweet, ye look sae kind,
That a’ wish to caress ye O!
But O! how I admire thy mind,
My bonnie black-e’ed lassie O!
I’ve seen thine e’en, like crystal clear,
Shine dimly through soft pity’s tear;
These are the charms that mak’ thee dear
To me, my black-e’ed lassie O!”

When David had finished the song, Bell said with a broad grin: “I never could sing but the ae sang o’ the *Bonnie, bonnie banks o’ Ben Lomond*, an’ it’s raither waefu’ for the noo; but there’s a verse I pickit up frae Gordie—he’s gaun to be a grand singer, Gordie; I’ll miss him, may be—but at ony rate the sang’s been at my tongue-end for a while, an’ d’ye ken, David, I think it’s you an’ me tae a nothing?

‘I lo’ed ne’er a laddie but **ane!**’

that’s me, ony way:

‘He lo’ed ne’er a lassie but me,
He’s willing to mak’ me his ain,
And his ain I am willing to be;’

that’s me tae.”

“That’s grand, Bell, that’s just exactly the very thing, the very thing, *the very thing*—that’s the ‘head-sheaf.’”

After this trip on “Parnassus,” which generally follows immediately after all newly-plighted troths, they settled down to a sober crack. David gave a de-

scription of his farm and stock, in which he was often interrupted by Bell's questions; very practical all of them were, and specially gratifying to David. It was surprising how much she got out of him in a quiet way. But I will not tarry over the details, nor say how long they sat, or how they parted; I will only mention that after David had risen to leave, they stood a long time busily talking. He had said something about getting the house "gi'en a bit sort up," but Bell said:

"Dinna fash mickle wi't, David; tradesfolk often tak' a lang time when they won in. When we get settled, we'll dae a' that far better after we see what's what."

After this night Bell seldom spoke of "*I'll do this, or I think that,*" but it was, "*We'll put a' richt—we'll consider't—we'll MANAGE 't.*"

She did not tell Mrs. Barrie directly of her engagement, but it could not be hidden. Bell's face was itself a tell-tale, and before the next forenoon was over she was asking Mrs. Barrie's advice on various subjects far removed at once from her household concerns, and from anything likely to require her consideration as a servant.

Early in the afternoon Bell asked Mrs. Barrie, with an unusual timidity, almost a sheepishness of manner,

if she would be so kind as to sell her "some o' the black currants, noo that a' the jam was made for the house?"

Mrs. Barrie took both Bell's hands in hers, looked into her face with a smile of intense delight, to the dumfounderment [confusion] of poor Bell, who tried in vain to restrain her grins and blushes.

"Bell, Bell, as you yourself often say, 'the cat's out o' the pock'—fairly out now. Allow me first to give both hands a good shake and wish you very much joy. I'm very, very glad for your sake, my good, kind Bell. May all that's good attend you and Mr. Tait. I will have a great deal more to say to you afterwards, but I must run and tell Mr. Barrie."

"There's somebody wi' him in the study the noo, mem," said Bell; "an' oh! if you please, dinna say much to me about this marrying business the day. I'm baith like to laugh and to greet about it yet, an' I canna find words to thank ye wi', so excuse me." Then, after a short pause: "Will ye sell me the berries, mem?"

"Sell, Bell? Sell to you! *sell* you what's more yours than mine! If I did not know you well, I would be both vexed and angry at you, but it's like yourself, Bell. Please never ask me about any such things; take them. I'll help you all I can to get

everything ready and purpose-like. As to the black currants, you must allow me to give you the sugar, and be sure and fill every empty jelly-pot in the house."

"Ye're ower kind, mem, far ower kind."

"Bell," said Mrs. Barrie, "don't say that again, for that is what I can never be. But there's Mr. Barrie disengaged now, and I must bring him in,"—which she did, and Bell and they got it over, not without some signs of emotion that each tried to hide, but none were ashamed to feel, for the bond of twenty years' faithful service was to them a cord not easily broken, and to Bell a retrospect of intense satisfaction; for a vision of her life-history passed before her, which may be summed up in the following lines:—

"An orphan was she, and they had been gude till her ;
Sure that was the thing brocht the tear to her e'e."

CHAPTER XII.

ANOTHER MARRIAGE AND HOME-COMING.

“Noo they’re crouse and canty baith,
Ha, ha, the wooing o’t.”

Burns.

THE “Forms of Procedure” in the translation of a Scottish Presbyterian minister are somewhat elaborate, and require a good deal of time for their various requirements of intimating, citing and hearing parties, sustaining and transmitting the call, and summoning the congregation to appear to answer the reasons for translation. When the call is presented, time is allowed for the minister’s decision; even after this, there are other steps to be taken, so that should the autumn season intervene, when presbytery meetings are rarely held unless for cases of extreme urgency, several months may elapse between the “call” and the “settlement.”

It was so in Mr. Barrie’s case; but in a small place like Blinkbonny, little things, that would in large towns be “lost in the crowd,” are found and founded

on to an extent much beyond their intrinsic importance. This must be my apology for stating that the regret at the prospect of Mr. Barrie's leaving was counterbalanced to a certain extent by the announcement of Bell's approaching marriage.

Under all ordinary circumstances Bell would have been and was a "fixture,"—so much so that for years past she had been universally called Bell Barrie, and the idea that she ever would be married was unborn. Hitherto the Edinburgh call had been looked at entirely in its public aspect as affecting the Free church of Blinkbonny, and little thought had been expended on the private view of the matter. It was taken for granted that the family would remove to Edinburgh; and Bell had so long been a part of it, as much so, in fact, as either Mr. or Mrs. Barrie, that although she was indirectly included in the feeling of general regret, she did not form a distinct element in the case.

When, therefore, it became known that she was to be married to David Tait of Blackbrae, I may say without exaggeration that the news was received with heartfelt delight. All who had come much into contact with Bell esteemed her highly, and those who knew her best liked her most. Her unwearied industry, her sterling worth, her kindly charity, her

humility and strong common sense, had been quietly appreciated. Indeed, she was so unostentatious and natural, and her good qualities were so universally known, that they were seldom commented on.

Bell was surprised, and not a little annoyed, at the number of folks who came to congratulate her on her approaching marriage; it would have pleased her much better had nothing been said about it.

"The place is like a gaun fair," said she to David, "mornin', noon, an' nicht. I canna get on wi' my wark for folk comin' wishin' me this an' that. Nae doubt a body likes to be likit, but no aye to be tell'd it. Mr. Taylor said the best thing, an' he bade nae time; a' he said was, 'Gi'e me a shake o' your hand, Bell; I'm a wee feared ye'll no' escape the woe.'

"'The woe!' said I; 'Mr. Taylor, what woe? that's a queer kind o' backin' to gi'e tae a gude wish.'

"'Bell,' said he, 'the Bible says, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you," an' that's what a'body's sayin' o' you the noo.'

"'I'm maybe no' as grateful as I should be,' says I 'but I wish they wadna speak about me at a', for if they kent me as weel as I ken mysel', they wadna speak as they dae; as gude auld George Brown used to say, "The best o' men were but men at the best," an' women's just sic-like. I've been but an unprofitable

servant baith to God an' man, although I think I may say that I've tried to do my best.'

"Says he, 'that's the richt way to tak' thae things, Bell. Haud on; naebody ever stack in the world but Lot's wife, an' she wad a gotten through fine, if she had held forrit as she was well tell't, an' no lookit back. There's nothing like makin' the shortcomin's o' the past warnin's, an' the mercies o' the past encouragements.'"

"But, Bell," said David, "wha d'ye think wished me weel in this matter? Ye'll never guess—there's mony mair forbye him, but nae less than Sir John M'Lelland came ane's errant to the hoose, an' he did gi'e you a flamin' character. Ae thing he said was, 'Scotland's a grand place to dee in, for a'budy speaks weel o' the deid; but it's the warst place to get marrit in, for if there's a hair to clash about, they'll make a tether o't,'—at least that was his meanin', if no' the vera words,—an' he said he wad defy mortal to say anything but gude o' you."

"It's because he disna ken ony better; but I'm obleeged till him," said Bell; "may we baith be respeckit by richt thinkin' kind o' folk; we maun try tae deserve it."

David continued: "Sir John tell'd me no' an ill story about himsel'. No lang after he was marrit, he

took his leddy to see auld Ailsie Ferguson, his henwife. Ailsie beikit [curtsied] an' bowed to the leddy, an' wished her a' that was gude; then she turned to Sir John an' wished him the same, sayin' that she was blythe to serve such a beautifu', handsome leddy, only she wad a likit if she had been bigger."

"'Bigger!' said Sir John; 'why do you wish that, Ailsie? It seems rather a singular sort of compliment.'

"'Oh, Sir John,' said Ailsie, 'they say that you got her wecht [weight] in gold wi' her, and of course the bigger she was the mair ye wad hae gotten.'"

"Very good for Ailsie," said Bell, "very good. Her an' me was weel acquaint."

A movement was set afoot to give Bell a present, and subscriptions were readily got from all classes, irrespective of church or other distinctive connection. There was more difficulty in determining how to expend the money than there had been in collecting it. Betty Kellock's was perhaps the best proposal.

"Gi'e Bell the hard siller; she'll gar't gang farther, and ware it better than ony o' us."

There were so many and so various proposals, that ultimately Mrs. Barrie had to be consulted, and she quietly sounded Bell, who would only speak on the

subject after she learned that she could not get out of it, and the result was that a "Paisley shawl" (I think it was also called a Paisley plaid, a "harness" plaid) and a china tea-set were procured.

A meeting of lady subscribers was held in the manse dining-room. As Dr. Stevenson insisted on being admitted, he made the presentation, in what was reported to me as "a real neat wee speech." Bell's reply was declared by those present to have been "beautiful"; even Miss Park said it was very becoming and most creditable for a person in Bell's position. The only fragment of it that I could pick up was that "she would not presume to invite ladies in their station to her plain hoose, but if any o' them would be kind enough to come, she wad hansel the teapot wi' a' her heart." Dr. Stevenson said, "Remember, Bell, you'll need to give me a *cinder* in my last cup."

Bell did not know that the Doctor referred to a little whisky when he said this. She look puzzled, hospitably puzzled, and said, "A cinder, Doctor! a cinder in your hinmost cup? The coals are unco assy [very ashy] hereabouts, an' it micht break the cup; but when a' ither folks are served, I could drop ane into the teapot if that would please ye."

"I'll drop it in myself, Bell, if you'll either give me the key of the cupboard, or put the bottle on the

table,” said the Doctor. “The cinder I mean will not burn a cork ; it’s ‘barley tea’ or ‘barley bree.’”

Mrs. Barrie gave Bell as her personal present a brooch of large dimensions, which contained locks of the hair of all the family ;—wee Nellie’s was in the middle. There was engraved on the back of the brooch: “From Mrs. Barrie to Isabella Cameron—July 1851. ‘The Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead and with me,’ Ruth i. 8.”

Bell was neither romantic, nor sentimental, nor demonstrative, but when she read the inscription, she kissed the brooch again and again and again, and for several nights after she got it, she often took it from under her pillow, and pressed it to her lips and to her heart.

Mr. Barrie’s present was a Bible in two volumes, and he was bewildered by the number of texts he would *like* to write on each.

“My dear,” said he to Mrs. Barrie, “I have spent some hours in considering what to write on Bell’s Bible, and have not yet decided, so many texts seem suitable. In the first place, I would like to write the last twenty-one verses of the Book of Proverbs. I have just been reading these, and it seemed to me as if the writer had Bell in his thoughts when he wrote them. It resembles one of those new-fashioned pictures that are

taken by the sun now-a-days, called 'daguerreotypes,'¹ invented by a Frenchman called Daguerre. Could anything more accurately descriptive of even plain homely Bell be imagined than 'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,'—'do him good and not evil all the days of his life,'—'worketh willingly with her hands,'—'*considereth* a field and buyeth it,'—'reacheth forth her hand to the needy,'—'in her tongue is the law of kindness,'—'looketh well to the ways of her household,'—'eateth not the bread of idleness,' and so on, my dear," added he, laying his hand on the Bible. "That is an old Book,—THE old Book,—but its references to human life—the lower as well as the higher life—are as applicable to the life of to-day as they were to that of two thousand years ago. The reading of these verses in the circumstances, and with the object I had in view, has delighted me; I think I never felt so irresistibly convinced that they were written by *Him* who knew what was in man, and what would suit mankind for all time."

Mr. Barrie also showed her a long list of other texts: "A succourer of many, and of myself also,"—"who be-

¹ The original process of photography, in which the picture was taken on a silvered plate. The daguerreotypes required to be held in a certain way to prevent the bright silverized plate from shining so as to confuse the eye, and they could not be used as negatives to take other impressions from, as photographs now are.

stowed much labour on us,”—“in labours more abundant, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often,” etc. He almost grudged Mrs. Barrie her quotation from Ruth, but he took part of the 12th verse of the second chapter, as also the blessing of the tribes in Numbers vi. 24-26: “The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace,” and a few other passages, until the front fly-leaf of both volumes was fairly covered.

Bell was immensely delighted with this gift, and the volumes occupied in the “room” at Blackbrae the place of honour on the small back table

The very important question of the marriage gown—Bell never got the length of a dress—was confined to the matters of colour and fabric, as the shape was to be her “invariable.” The dressmaker asked her if she would like it to be low-bodied, for bare necks and bare arms were in vogue for dress occasions at that time.

“What d’ye mean by low-bodied?” said Bell. “D’ye mean lang tails that ye hae to haud up for fear o’ their trailing amang the mud? That I’ll never wear; mak’ it just like this every way.” *This* only reached to the ankles, and was, as all her “kirk-claes” were, of douce black.

“Oh,” said the dressmaker, “I meant, would you like a bare neck and sleeves? These are the fashion for dress occasions at present.”

Bell looked indignantly at her, and said: “Hoo dare you speak o’ sic heathenish fal-de-rals to me? Bare necks and sleeves! I think I see mysel’!” But she was quieted by the dressmaker’s gentle reply, that she was merely inquiring, not proposing such a thing; for she had an elderly lady to fit yesterday who would have a “low-bodied.”

“There’s nae fules like auld fules, they say. Black’s no’ lucky to get married in, so I’ve ta’en a red merino, an’ mak’ it as ye’ve aye done my goons. An’ be sure an’ send me the bits that’s ower—they micht come usefu’; an’ as I’ll no’ aye hae somebody to ‘hook my back’ where I’m gaun, pit gude big hooks an’ gude wide eyes on’t.”

Dresses in those days were fastened by hooks and eyes at the back, and many a firm “yerk” it took to make them meet when done by the wearer alone. The words may seem strange to younger readers, but older householders will well remember the familiar sound of “Hook my back.”

Bell wished to postpone the marriage until the flitting to Edinburgh was over, but Mrs. Barrie would not hear of this; so the earliest possible day was

fixed, Bell having determined to get Blackbrae all right, and thereafter to see Mrs. Barrie settled in Edinburgh.

Bell found a "best-maid" in Mary Barrie, who was now a handsome young lady of eighteen. Besides having had a good education, she had the not less important advantage of a thorough training in household work from her mother and Bell. She was a sweet-tempered, charming girl, and entered into the preparations for Bell's marriage with great spirit,—so much so that she became Bell's adviser or rather confidant, and put her head, her hands, and her heart into the work.

Mr. Tait, the schoolmaster, whose examination occupied part of an earlier chapter, was "best-man."

James Barrie, now a promising young student, heard Mary wondering who would give away the bride, and he expressed to Mrs. Barrie his desire to do so; but his mother thought he was rather young, and had intended to ask Mr. Taylor, when another applicant for the honour appeared.

Mr. Tait, the schoolmaster, was calling on Mr. Walker on parish business, and, as his uncle David of Blackbrae had told him of his intended marriage, and "trysted" him for "best-man" the day after Bell and he had "made it up," he was the first to give Mr. Walker the news.

I have omitted till now to tell that Mr. Walker was a capital player on the violin; his general instrument, indeed, was the violoncello, "the bass fiddle"—possibly because it was more solemn and ministerial-looking than the "wee fiddle;" and he had few equals in playing Scotch music of all kinds.

When he heard of David Tait's approaching marriage with Bell, he started up in an ecstasy of delight, threw up his arms, and said:

"What! Bell Barrie married—David Tait married! Bell Barrie married to David Tait—David married to Bell! That's news! that *is* news! It's the best thing I've heard of for many a day;" and he took a good, hearty laugh. Then he resumed:

"That is *news*! He's a decent, honest, sterling man, your uncle—a great friend of mine" (Mr. Walker's forte was friendliness—his heart was larger than his head); "a fine, a very fine man. Then Bell; Bell's a—it beats me to tell what Bell is. She's the cleverest an' best servant in Blinkbonny; but she's more—she's—she's Bell Barrie, and that's the pink o' perfection for a farmer's wife. She's a tocher in hersel'. Bell for a manager—Bell for a garden, or hens, or cows, or cookin'! Excuse me, Mr. Tait, I cannot refrain from expressing my delight. I'll need to try the fiddle, and see if it will quiet me. Bell mistress o' Blackbrae! They're

made for one another. It never struck me before, but it's perfection."

He got the "wee" fiddle down from its peg in the study, and marched up and down playing almost furiously several old Scotch tunes, and occasionally singing a line or a few words of some of them, such as "A thrifty queen was Kate Dalrymple," "We're a' gaun to the waddin', Lassie, will ye gae?" "Hey the bonnie! ho the bonnie! hey the bonnie breastknots!" "Dainty Davie," "Fy, let us a' to the bridal," etc., and he ended by playing "Auld langsyne," with exquisite feeling.

Not many days after this Mr. Walker called on Bell, and offered to "give her away." He was accepted with becoming thanks, Bell declaring "that it was far ower kind,—that she never could have expected to hae been countenanced in the way she had been by a'boddy, but really this was the crowner." And when all the wedding guests had met in Knowe Park, in stalked worthy Mr. Walker, his sonsy face beaming with delight, arm in arm with Bell, whom he delivered with quite a "Sir Roger de Coverley" grace by the side of David. Bell, when referring to this memorable act of attention on Mr. Walker's part, used to say, "Mr. Walker oxtered me in his ainsel', and he was a fine buirdly man to cleek."

The knot was soon tied by Mr. Barrie, "assisted by Mr. Walker;" and Mr. Barrie, whose prerogative it was to be the first to congratulate the happy couple immediately at the close of the ceremony shook hands with the young wife, and said: "Mrs. Tait, I wish you very much happiness, and every blessing in your married life."

Bell was demure till now, and had not lifted her eyes from the ground, but this roused her, and she said:

"Oh! Mr. Barrie, ca' me Bell, dinna ca' me Mrs. Tait,"—looking earnestly into Mr. Barrie's face.

Mrs. Barrie followed, and also said "Mrs. Tait," etc.

"Mrs. Barrie," said Bell softly and imploringly, "if you please, mem, dinna you ca' me Mrs. Tait."

Mr. Walker was number three who called her Mrs. Tait, and she remonstrated with him likewise:

"Oh, Maister Walker, Maister Walker, dinna Mrs. Tait me—I canna thole't."

He made one of his little jokes—"To-night be Mrs. Tait, but seeing you rebel, we will re-Bell you to-morrow."

"That's no' bad," said David. These were the first words he had uttered since he entered the room.

A "towsie tea." or "tea and eating," followed the

ceremony. Mary and the schoolmaster cut up the bridescake, and to Bell's great delight Gordie got the ring. Mr. Barrie made a short and happy speech, but Bell rather broke down in the middle of it. Mr. Walker also said a little about both David and Bell; she brightened up as he referred to her "Black Daisy," and all were put into excellent humour by his reference to "Braidnebs."

When this was over, Bell, forgetting her new position, started to collect the tea-things, and said she would wash them up before she went away. Mrs. Barrie did not object to Bell's singular procedure, but followed her to the kitchen, and after again wishing her everything that was good, she said:

"Bell"—not Mrs. Tait, greatly to Bell's delight—"I understand that the young lads of the village intend to give Mr. Tait and you a noisy convoy. I think you should slip quietly away, so as to get to Blackbrae before they assemble."

This hint was taken, and the couple set off alone—not, however, until Gordie had made David's back feel the weight of an old slipper with which he had armed himself, and which he applied with all his might.

Those in the manse that intended to take part in the "home-coming" allowed about half an hour

to elapse before they followed to Blackbrae, where David's sister and a few neighbours were surprised to see the "happy pair" arrive earlier than they were expected—and alone. Indeed, David and Bell, or rather Mr. and Mrs. Tait, appeared at the "room" door before the table was "set," and Mrs. Brunton, David's sister, stood quite aghast when she saw them.

"Preserve us a'," said she, "what's brocht ye sae sune? I wasna lookin' for ye for an hour yet, an' it'll no' dae to come into the house without gettin' the lucky cake broken o'er your heid, Bell. Ye'll need tae gang out again till the lave [rest] comes, for I'm no' gaun to crown ye wi't till the best-man an' the best-maid's here,—it wadna be canny [safe], forbye [besides] it wadna be wiselike to break the infar-cake¹ till there's some wanters and swankies [unmarried females and nimble young men] to scram'le for't; so Bell, David and you'll just need to gang into the garden or through the parks till the lave comes."

David said: "We'll dae nae sic things," and Bell said: "It was nae matter about the infar-cake, for it was jist an auld superstition about it's no' bein

¹ *Infar*,—the entertainment made for the reception of the bride in the bridegroom's house.—SPALDING.

lucky no' to hae't richt broken, or about dreamin' ower't to ken wha wad marry ye."

But Mrs. Brunton was immoveable in this matter, so they had to submit.

The time, however, was not lost: David showed Bell the cows, the live stock, and the steading. They had but half finished the survey of the garden when the Knowe Park contingent came up; they joined it, and were convoyed into the house in a style quite to Mrs. Brunton's mind. The infar-cake was duly broken over Bell's head, and the usual doggrel rhyme repeated:

" Welcome to your ain fireside—
Health and wealth attend the bride!
Wanters noo your true weird make—
Joes are spaed by th' infar-cake."

When the young lads of the village gathered round the manse to give David and Bell a kindly but rough token of their respect, they were sadly disappointed to find that they were too late. This spoiling of their expected "ploy" [innocent frolic] irritated them, and the more thoughtless determined to go to Blackbrae and play some tricks on David, or, as the ringleaders expressed it, "they wad gi'e him't for this." They returned to the village to get a creel, a fishwife's basket, with which to "creel" David,—a custom now unknown, but common forty years ago.

In my earlier days I have witnessed very rude conduct when the rougher and "drouthy" neighbours got the young husband into a creel, as soon as he appeared outside on the day after the marriage, and roughly jostled him until his wife came out, kissed him, and produced the "bottle." Whilst this custom was dying out such extremes were not practised. The husband got the creel put on his back, with some weight in it (sometimes a boy, sometimes a pig, but oftener a few stones), and the whisky was greedily drained by the creelers to "your very good health," but the wife did not need to appear.

Dan chanced to overhear some of the more fiery spirits concocting schemes to annoy his friends at Blackbrae. He went home as quickly as he could, "loosed" his ferocious, bandy-legged, ugly (not in Dan's eyes, for he thought him a beauty, just a perfect picture) bull-dog "Burke," took a short cut through the fields, carrying with him a huge "flail" used for threshing corn, and sat down on the "loupin'-on stane"—a stone at the side of Blackbrae farm-yard gate used when mounting on horseback.

Dan was leisurely smoking his black cutty-pipe, having "Burke" on his right side, collared and chained, the chain being wound round Dan's arm, and the flail lying against the wall of the farm-

shed at his left, when the Blinkbonny lads, who had been leisurely discussing the plan of attack as they came along, turned off the main road into the Blackbrae farm road.

Rarely has a crowd looked so cowed or so cowardly as this did when they saw Dan. He seemed provokingly unconscious of the change of aspect that took place when they observed him, and said in quite a familiar, off-hand way, with the pipe still in his cheek, "It's a fine summer nicht for a walk this."

"Burke" was not quite so neighbourly, for he growled and oggled and strained his chain so much that the crowd instinctively fell back.

Dan spoke to "Burke" very kindly. "What ails ye, Burke? They's a' our ain folk, come out for a mouthfu' o' fresh air. Tak' it canny, Burke,—ye needna carry on as if there was mischief gaun on; they's a' friends o' yours, an' mine, an' Blackbrae's, and they're come out to wish him an' the new mistress weel."

Some of the wilder spirits now began to chaff.

"When did you turn a special constable, Dan? Ye're the last man that ou wad 'a thocht wad 'a spoilt the fun."

"No' me," said Dan, "as mickle fun as ye like—tak' yer fill o't. Whare wad folk hae daffin' [diver-

sion] if no' at a waddin'? Be ceevil, an' dinna work mischeef, an' naebody'll find fau't wi' ye."

Dan wound up "Burke's" chain, shouldered the flail, and headed the crowd up to the front door. David came frankly out and thanked them for the compliment. Bell also came to the door in reply to a call for the "mistress." And Mrs. Brunton followed with a bottle of whisky (pardon the truth, ye teetotallers, for so it was wont in Blinkbonny in those days), and said, "Come awa', some o' ye, an' drink the couple's health."

None of the young men answered the invitation. After a pause Dan stepped forward and said: "Will ony o' you haud ma doug, and I'll drink their healths?"

There was no reply. "Then keep quiet and dinna cheer till I tell ye, for 'Burke's' a wee roused. I'm no' as keen o' a glass as I've seen me; I can either tak' it or want it." Then taking the glass of whisky in his hand, he said: "Here's t'ye, Mr. Tait, an' here's to the mistress,—baith your very gude healths, an' may a' that's gude befa' you," and drained it at a draught.

"Noo," said he, "come awa', some mair o' ye, an' drink luck to Blackbrae, and after ye're dune we'll gi'e them a cheer."

Very few answered Dan's invitation. When no other could be prevailed on to do so, Dan said: "Noo dinna cheer till I grup 'Burke' by the collar; the chain micht snap." He then wound the chain round his arm, stooped down, and held Burke firmly. The dog seemed to be affronted, for he tugged, and strained, and bayed. When Dan got him fairly in hand, he said: "Now, lads, cheer awa'; gi'e our young friends" (here the crowd were unmannerly, and broke out into "Oh-oh-young? ho-ho") "a real hearty ane." This was done. Burke joined in the noise if he did not help the melody, and trailed or harled Dan a few yards nearer the crowd. David stepped forward and again thanked them. Another cheer followed, and all were in grand fettle, when a voice (luckily from some unrecognisable throat at the back of the crowd) cried out, "Three cheers for 'Auld Braidnebs.'"

"What!" said Dan sharply; "wha dared to say that?" and he made for the flail, which he reached with difficulty, as "Burke" seemed determined to face the crowd. Bell saw that Dan was excited, and laid her hand on his shoulder, intending to pacify him.

"For ony favour," said he nervously, "dinna come near me; abune a', dinna lay hands on me, or I'll no' answer for Burke."

When he turned round to ask again, "Wha said that?" the close was empty, and the crowd was flying pell-mell homewards—their speed not a little quickened by Watty's remark that "Burke was sure to break the chain, an' pity the man that's hin'most."

"Dan," said Bell, "I've forgotten a box; ask Jenny Bennet"—Bell's worthy successor in Mrs. Barrie's kitchen—"to gie't. It's below the kitchen dresser, tied up in broon paper an' 'skeenie' [twine], an' fetch't out wi' ye the morn."

Dan brought it, and he was so considerably treated, that he actually took dinner in the kitchen, a thing he had seldom done anywhere. David convoyed him through the "close" as he was leaving, and the sow that had vexed him so much attracted Dan's notice.

"Ye'll be needin' me sune, Mr. Tait," said he, pointing to the sow; "that pig's ready for killin'."

"I canna bide it; I canna bear the sicht o't," said David. "I intended it for our ain use this winter, but since it ate the Corinthians, I wadna let a particle o't within ma mouth."

"Ate what?" said Dan.

"Ye may weel say what? It ate a' the Second Corinthians and fully the half o' the First."

Dan, supposing them to be some kind of new vege-

table, said, as a kind of feeler, "But she wadna eat them a' at ance—baith the second an' the first?"

"But she did, the mair's the pity," said David; "an' it was on a Sabbath mornin' tae, the abominable cratur."

Dan was still more at a loss to make out what he meant, so he said inquiringly, "Some o' the first an' a' the second? She left some o' the first crap, did she, an' ye planted mair, or did they grow again? or was't some kind o' pushin [poison] or med'cine stuff that didna 'gree wi' her?"

"'Gree wi' her!" said David in amazement; "'gree wi' her! some sort o' medicine?—What d'ye mean? It was the Corinthians out o' the Bible."

"Out o' the Bible?" said Dan,—“out o' the Bible! I never kent that ony o' it was for eatin'."

"For eatin'?" repeated David,—“for eatin'! It was some o' the leaves o' the Bible, the bit that the Epistle to the Corinthians was printed on, that she ate, or tore out ony way, an' made them useless."

"Was that a'?" said Dan.

"A'—a'—a', Dan, was't no' plenty? It made me a' grue [shiver] to see her munchin' them. I couldna touch her; I canna even bring mysel' to sell her, for naebody that kent (and I couldna but tell) wad eat her either."

“What for no’?” said Dan, “she’s neither ony the waur nor ony the better o’t. If ye’ll gi’e me a gude luckpenny, I’ll sell her for ye.”

David was glad to get the pig out of his premises. Dan got a little profit by the transaction, and thus both were pleased.

Bell’s “kirkin’” was a quiet affair. David and she started early, and were seated before many folks had come in to the church. The second volume of Mr. Barrie’s presentation Bible was carried thither by Bell in a clean white handkerchief and used for the day. In her other hand she had a few sprigs of balm and southernwood, which she moved backwards and forwards at her nose until they were withered, and limp, and double.

They dined at Knowe Park. Bell looked vexed when Mrs. Barrie said, “You know the spare bedroom, Bell; put off your bonnet and shawl in it, and I daresay you’ll remember the way to the parlour.”

“Mrs. Barrie,” said Bell, “oh, dinna make a stranger o’ me. Best bedroom!—me gang till the best bedroom? No, no, I’ll gang to my auld room,”—which she did; and she was heartily welcomed by Jenny, her successor, who proved to be a revised, I dare not say an improved, edition of Bell.

Blackbrae soon bore evidences of Bell’s presence.

The window-panes were "glancin' clean," David said ; "the house was lichtsomer an' sweeter." The part of the "close" before the front door was railed off and converted into a kitchen garden, and the Knowe Park family, especially Mary and Gordie, spent several happy afternoons at Bell's house.

Many others enjoyed the homely hospitality of Blackbrae. Dr. Stevenson, one of the hardest wrought members of the hardest wrought class of men in Scotland, namely, the country surgeons, often took pot-luck there, and he never had to ask for a "cinder," although at the same time he was very sparing in his use of Bell's bottle. But he found her so well provided with many things, little in themselves, but invaluable to poor invalids, that he made her his "Lady Bountiful," and found her always not only ready and willing, but, as Mr. Barrie expressed it, "pre-eminently judeecious."

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

“ Life’s a weary journey alane,
Blithe’s the road when we wend wi’ ither ;
Mutual gi’ ein’ is mutual gain,
Ae gude turn deserves anither.”

Jas. Ballantine.

AS my readers are more familiar with Mrs. Tait by her old name of Bell, it will be as well to hold to it in what little we have to add to these “ bits ;” for although she filled her new station as effectively as she did the old one, it is rather to wind up old matters than to enter upon new ones that she will now come before us.

Before the actual flitting from Knowe Park took place, Bell spent two or three busy days packing those things that required specially careful handling ; for she was a walking inventory of all that the house contained, and knew the history of every article in it. An interesting volume of choice “ bits ” could easily be made up from her remarks and stories about many

of the odds-and-ends that cast up, for she not only told the incidents with which they were associated, but often gave a sketch of the life-history of those they reminded her of, whilst all the time she kept cleverly packing on.

Mary Barrie, who was Bell's chief assistant in the packing, picked up in these few days more about her family history, and especially its connection with some of the folks about Blinkbonny, than she had learned during all her former lifetime. Her mother's marriage dress brought out a long story; even her father's bachelor umbrella had its share of Bell's comments.

"Bachelor umbrella?" said Mary, as she put it up; "it's double the size of papa's new one—it's quite a family tent, and such a weight! The handle is like a friar's shaven crown, with a large bird's bill sticking out from it. And how thick the blue-black cotton is; and bone tips to the strong whalebone ribs; and what an elaborately embossed, sharp, tapering end it has! It's three times the weight of the umbrellas now-a-days."

"The mair's the pity," said Bell; "that's the kind for stan'in' a' weathers. I often wonder that Mr. Barrie doesna use't yet."

"Fancy papa like this!" said Mary, as she took

the massive article under her arm and stalked about the room.

“Fancy, or no’ fancy,” said Bell, “I see naething wrang wi’t. It’s just very purpose-like ; it’ll fend the weet [defend from rain] an’ face the blast better than the thin-shankit apologies o’ things that’s gaun noo, wi’ their stockin’-wire ribs an’ muslin cleedin’. I mind o’ haein’t ance when Dr. Guthrie met me in a shower. He was glad to get into the beild o’t, an’ he said, in his jokin’ way, ‘ My good woman, that wad dae for the roof o’ a preachin’ tent.’ But ye’ll no’ mind o’ the tent preachin’s, there’s nae sic thing noo, but I’ve seen them langsyne in Dumbarton,—one minister serving the tables in the kirk, an’ anither preachin’ to the folk in the kirkyard round it. The tent was just like a sentry-box on stilts. I’ve kent the preachin’s gang on frae about ten in the mornin’ till nine at nicht.”

In one of the rooms Mrs. Barrie looked towards a little drawer, and slightly nodded to Bell ; she nodded feelingly in return, but no words passed between them. Mrs. Barrie laid a small box on a chair and left the room ; Bell opened the drawer and solemnly took out a little beaver bonnet, a very small fur tippet, a string of blue beads, a child’s basket rattle, and a red-and-white wooden luggie, with a handle formed by one of its long

staves,—when shaken, some mysteriously concealed peas in the bottom of it rattled. It had been Nellie's porridge dish, and still contained a pair of little slippers, a small copy of Watts' hymns in scarlet binding, and some bits of broken china with gold on them—Nellie's pennies.

These and other memorials of “Bell's bairn” were daintily taken out by Bell; but she was not quite well-bred to Mary when doing this, as she studiously turned her back on her, and kept her from getting near the drawer. After its contents had been beautifully packed in the little box, she closed, wrapped, and roped it, saying, “I'll carry you mysel'. She'll never need to flit—she's hame *A'ways*.”

Dan came very early on the flitting morning to help to load David's carts, which were to take the furniture to Edinburgh; and between the intervals of helping on with what was carried out, he had a crack with the horses, for he was in charge outside. Dan was fond of all kinds of animals; horses were second in his scale, now that he had given up game fowls.

“First and foremost,” he used to say, “dougs, then horses, then goats,” and so on. In his professional capacity as a rude veterinary surgeon, he knew the Blackbrae teams well, and as the first cart was to be taken in by David himself, and Bell *would* travel by it

(although urged to take the railway, which had lately come within four miles of Blinkbonny, and to which the drosky was to take the family), old "Rosie" was to lead the van. With the exception of a spot on her forehead and one "white stocking on her far leg," Rosie was a coal-black, thick-set, quick-stepping, trusty mare, a great favourite of Dan's; and she seemed to know it, for while he had a good deal to say, she had abundance of leisure to listen and seemed to enjoy the chat.

"Well, Rosie, my dawtie [darling]," said he, at the same time patting her nose and kindly pulling her ears, "ye wad need tae be in gude fettle [trim] the day. Ye've a far road afore ye; but there's nane fitter for't. Ye'll no' reist [stubbornly stick] on the lang dreich [tiresome] Cadger's Brae, nor on the Ramsune [ram's horn] Hill; for altho' it's no' sae lang as the Cadger's Brae, it's a nasty strauchty-squinty [zig-zag] bit, wi' terrible snell snabs [steep parts] that tak's the wind mair frae a beast than a lang steady pu'. I ken ye o' the auld, Rosie; ye'll scart [scratch] yer way up, diggin' yer shoon intae the road till the fire's fleein' frae them, an' bendin' yer fore-legs wi' a' yer pith, and strauchtin' them back again wi' a nick like the spring o' a gardener's knife. You for a steady day's wark, Rosie; you're no' ane o' the

breengein', flingin' [rashly running, kicking] kind, Rosie ; ye just snoove [move steadily] awa', like linseed out o' a pock—on an' on—steady, steady"—and much to the same effect.

As the journey was a long one, Rosie's cart started at a very early hour. When all was ready, Bell, as she had to mount on the top of some mattresses which had been put there for her comfortable journey, handed Nellie's box to Dan to hold, saying :

"Eh, Dan, that's wee Nellie's things in that box, I'll carry't on my lap a' the way. D'ye ken, Dan, that your dream has hardly ever been out o' my head since I packit them ? I aye think I see her in her braw mansion, lookin' doon on the confushun an' upturn o' the flittin'. Nae flittin', or confushun, or bother for her noo. Na— We maun a' try to get up beside her, Dan, gin the time comes."

"It's worth tryin'," said Dan ; "'deed is't," as Rosie, led by David, with Bell as a deck cargo, scarcely visible in the dark morning, started for Edinburgh. The old mare's long swinging step served to keep David warm, but it actually set Bell asleep. Luckily she was well wrapped up, so that she took no skaith.

As Rosie's cart went out, Sandie Ramage, David's head ploughman, appeared with the next cart, drawn

by "Charlie Gray," another of David's plough-horses. Dan had a good deal to say to "Charlie" also, but Bell's remark about Nellie's mansion had changed the current of his thoughts, and he spoke more to Charlie about this matter than about the Edinburgh journey.

"We'll need to try't, as your mistress said, Charlie," said Dan, after exchanging civilities with the horse, "an' wi' the like o' her I get on no' that ill; but it disna set the like o' me, for ye ken, Charlie, I've been a wild, throughither kind o' a man, to mak' ony show off or palaver about thae things; an' forbye, what mak's folk sae keen to speir into a' the oots an' ins o' that kind o' thing at the like o' me? It's ma business. It's ill kennin' some folk, an' there's nae satisfyin' ithers, an' d'ye no' think, Charlie, that maybe the best o' folk has enough adae wi' themsel's? Mr. Walker says that, onyway, an' he's a man I can speak till. We've haen mony a crack, an' I've aye been the better o't; he's that hamely an' kindlike, an' firm tae. He tak's pains tae mak' the thing plain, an' he doesna miss ye if ye're in faut; he grups ye gey sharp, an' gars [makes] ye a' shiver if ye've been misbehavin'."

Finding Charlie a patient listener, Dan went on as leisure admitted; but it would be tedious to record all he said. One bit was spoken rather louder than the rest, and reported to me as follows:—

"I'm willin' to hear o' thae things in the like o' the kirk, or when there's a wheen [number] thegither speakin' about them; but I tak' very ill wi' the like o' Miss Park speirin' [inquiring] if I've fand this, or am sure o' that; an' after gaun ower about a dizzen o' lang-nebbit dictionar' words, she tell'd me if I couldna say I had them an' ither evidences, as she ca'd them, I was deid an' something.—An' what business had she to say that nae gude man could keep a big ugly doug—meanin' my Burke? He's a hantle better-lookin' than her, wi' her wizened leathery chafts [jaws]. I've never letten him fecht, or gaen to see either cock-fechts or doug-fechts, since I saw the pictures. Burke an' me's ower auld friends to pairt noo; in fac', Charlie, I learn mair frae him than the like o' Miss Park. I whiles dae up her bit garden, an' she speaks that saucy an' disdainfu'-like at me, as if I was some nasty mongrel. She minds me o' the doctors at Greenock lang syne, that used to boord the ships if there was onybody no' weel in them. They were the sharp blades. They never even offert to gang near the puir sailors to cure them, or help them onyway; it was just, 'Bad case; off to hospital—off too—off,' an' sic like. Nae doubt she means to dae me gude, but yon's no' the way! It's like as Burke used to be amang the sheep whiles when I was gi'ein' him a walk lang syne; it was a kind o'

vexin' sicht, for Burke wasna *exactly* like a collie amang them."

After all the carts were laden, Dan waited to convoy the last one for a few miles on the road. Mrs. Barrie called him in, and said :

"Now, Dan, I'm not going to pay you in money for this morning's work."

"Pay me !" said Dan ; "pay *me* in money ! Ye ken better than to vex me that sair. I couldna even look Burke in the face if I took a farden [farthing]. He wad be that affrontit at me that he wadna gi'e me house-room."

"I never thought of offering you money, Dan," replied Mrs. Barrie. "I am quite pleased to accept your help as a friend of the family ; but to keep you from forgetting us altogether"—

"That's what I'll never dae," said Dan very firmly.

Mrs. Barrie bowed neatly, and proceeded in a homelier tone than before: "To keep you in mind of us all, I ask you to take this picture, and hang it in your house ; it's your old friend, 'The Angel's Whisper.'"

The picture-frame was leaning against the dining-room wall, and only its rough brown paper back was visible until Mrs. Barrie had named it. She then lifted it up and turned its face towards Dan. The poor man started, applied first the cuff of his coat,

then his rough woollen cap, to his eyes; and, as he afterwards told Bell, "I fand out where my heart was, sure eneuch; it flappert about like a fresh-run sea-troot wi' a hook in its mooth. I was that gliffed [taken by surprise] that I couldna even say Thank ye." Mrs. Barrie had great difficulty in getting him to take the picture.

"Take that,—that frae you! that's the brawest thing in yer hoose. That's no' like ma house at a'. It's far ower splendid—it's just awfu' bonnie; that's a pictur' an' no mistake," said Dan; and he kept gazing at it until his solitary eye watered.

Mrs. Barrie would take no denial. She advised Dan to take it home at once; and, shaking him by the hand, she said: "Good-bye, Dan; many thanks for all your kindness. Be sure if ever you are in Edinburgh to come and see us."

Dan's eye followed her as she left the room with a funny smile on it; and he said to himself:

"Me come to see ye—*me!* That wad be a farce. I think the offishers [police] wad keep a gey sharp look-out for some nichts after they saw me at siccan a house." Here he was interrupted by hearing Sandie Ramage saying, "I'll tak' a bit draw, an' then start."

Dan quickly crossed the field with his precious burden, taking great care to keep the top of the

picture uppermost, and not to shake it. Sandie Ramage said he heard him say, "If I'm no' carefu', I nicht wauken the bonnie bairn." After he got it safely home, and put, still top uppermost, inside of his box bed, he put the only two chairs he had in the house before it, locked the door, and convoyed Charlie Gray until he had mastered the "Ramsune Hill," assisted by Dan from the back of the cart at the zig-zag turns. He would have gone farther, but he was wearying to have a good look at the picture. On his way home he met the drosky containing Mrs. Barrie and the children. Gordie, who was beside the driver, cried to those inside, "Here's Dan coming!" As they passed, all waved him a kind good-bye, and poor Dan stood, cap in hand, looking at the receding vehicle until Gordie turned round and waved his cap. Dan did the same, and said laughingly, "Ye're an awfu' ane. He's a stuffy laddie that,—he'll no' let grass grow at his heels. But they're a' gude thegither, an' they hae been gude to me. Ma blessings may be no' muckle worth, but they hae't frae my heart,—God bless them a'."

When he reached his own door he found Mr. Walker there. He had been at the London Exhibition of 1851, and had got from a publisher, an old Blinkbonny man, some copies of the *Pilgrim's Progress*,

one of which he had brought to Dan, who was so proud of his new picture that he asked Mr. Walker in to see it. Mr. Walker explained to him some of the pictures in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, which greatly interested him. A neighbour's boy occasionally came in and read it to him, greatly to Dan's delight. Had I room to give his comments, they would astonish even very learned men; but I must take leave of Dan for the present, and am glad to leave him such a quiet neighbourly man, that when an impertinent fellow shortly after this called "Braidnebs" after him, Dan quietly looked at him and said:

"If I was as I've seen me, I wad 'a made a fule o' mysel' the noo; an' ye're trying to mak' a fule o' me, but ye'll find out that ye're jist makin' a fule o' yersel'. The game's here yet, but it disna show up at a dirty barn-door bantin' that kens nae better. Man, I'm sorry for ye."

The flitting got all right to Edinburgh. Bell had not been there before, and was greatly taken with the Castle. "It was bigger and had mair houses on't than Dumbarton Castle; but there was ae thing, it hadna the bonnie Clyde round it." When she arrived at the house she set to work at once, William Morrison, the singing deacon formerly mentioned, who had charge of the flitting, having come off with the early train.

“Weel, Willie, is the house a’ ready? Is a’ the lums soopit [chimneys swept]? It’s a bit nice-like house. Has May Ritchie gotten’t a’ clean?”

Here May, Guy’s daughter, appeared to answer for herself.

“A’s as clean as a new preen [pin],” said May.

Bell was now inside, and evidently had not the same high estimate of the cleanness of the house as May had.

“Let’s see,” said she as she sniffed about. “May, it’s hardly just that; it’s rather like the ‘Willie Cossar’ (an old name for a large-sized pin) that Dan used to pick his pipe wi’, an’ hit was very dim,—yellow, green, an’ a’ colours. But I’ll gi’e a bit hand, an’ we’ll sune take out what’s left,—the feck [most] o’t’s out, onyway;” and Bell soon put a new face on the parts that needed attention.

Mrs. Barrie wished her to stay over the Sabbath, and to be present at the introduction of Mr. Barrie to his new charge, but Bell did not relish that idea at all. Although the call had helped on her marriage, it had parted her from her best friends; and she said to David, that “altho’ there was naebody she likit sae weel to hear as Mr. Barrie, she wad Wishart-Kirk naie.”

After getting things "a wee snod" in the new house, she fulfilled her early promise to David to put everything right by making a good many very sensible purchases for Blackbrae. Not even an Edinburgh shopkeeper could induce Bell to buy, hardly even to look at, anything she did not think needful;—she had matured her inventory of wants, and held to it. She quickly scented that she was wrong if she went into a "cheap John" shop, as she called it; and, when outside, said to David:

"It's hard for a greedy e'e to hae a leal heart: we'll hae nae trash in our house—a's no' gold that glitters." The result of her shopping was: "I dinna ken whether M'Laren or Lauther's the best shop, but there's this much, they hae gude things; an' if ye're willing to pay for them, ye'll get the very best, an' hit's aye the cheapest."

Bell and David had resolved to furnish one or two of the rooms, so that she could invite her old friends to stay with her. "She thocht they wad like to come, an' she wad be as glad to see them, specially Gordie, but 'deed ony o' them a'." Sandie Ramage got all the shoppings gathered together, and after bidding good-bye to Mrs. Barrie's household, they "drove the day into the night," and landed safely at Blackbrae.

There they were "as happy as the day was lang,"

Bell doing her part as thoroughly as she had ever done it in Mrs. Barrie's service, but with even more pawki-ness [shrewdness] than ever; and she carried on her experiments with her hens,—indeed, with all the live stock,—until, to them, “her very foot had music in’t” as she went amongst them. And David and she had as cosy a fireside as could be found in broad Scotland, until for miles round, the best recommendation that a servant could have was that she had been a year or two at Blackbrae when she was a lassie.

Many acts of considerate kindness are told by the poor and the needy about the mistress at Blackbrae; for Bell's heart expanded as her power of doing good increased. She had little romantic poetry in her nature, for her favourite book in that way was the admirable collection of nursery songs that first appeared at the end of a book called “Whistle-binkie,” which is unhappily now very scarce. Bell had the “Songs for the Nursery” bound separately, and many a night did she entertain the Barrie bairns with its admirable Doric: “Willie Winkie,” “Cockie-Leerie-La,” “John Frost,” “The A B C,” “Uncle Jamie,” “Cur-rook-i-ty-doo,” etc.; but she always ended with “The Blind Beggar Man,” and to this day she carries out the noble sentiments embodied in the following lines:—

"To the feckless and friendless, my bairns, aye be kind ;
Be feet to the lame, and be eyes to the blind ;
'Twas to share wi' the needfu' our blessings were gi'en,
And the friend o' the poor never wanted a frien'.

"He who tempers the wind to the lamb that is shorn,
Will bless those who take from life's pathway a thorn ;
And the 'cup of cold water' that kindness bestows,
On the heart back in rivers of gladness o'erflows.

"Oh, tent you the lear' frae your mither ye learn,
For the seed springs in manhood that's sawn in the bairn ;
And mind it will cheer you through life's little span,
The blessing that fa's frae the blind beggar man."

Before putting these "Bits from Blinkbonny" into the hands of the public, I asked Mr. Andrew Taylor, my old friend the precentor already referred to, to look over them ; for old Mr. Taylor, and worthy Mr. Morrison the minister, and Miss Park, and many of those who are mentioned in the "Bits," have passed away.

His criticism was : " Well, I've read your ' Bits,' an' they're no' bad, considerin'. Ye've said rather much about the Free Kirk an' Bell ; for although she's a nice body, she's just like oursel's, an' no' the kind to make a book o'. An' then Dan was a queer subject to mix up wi' the ithers. It's a' true enough so far. I mind o' the braid-nebs an' the dream, an' David himsel' tell'd me about the sow an' the Corinthians. The whole affair brings me in mind o' a fire-screen my

daughter won at a bazaar; it's covered wi' pictures o' a' sorts an' sizes, wi' scenes out o' every country under the sun, an' at a' times o' the year, simmer an' winter; there's butterflies bigger than folk, an' oranges and peaches, and even shells, growin' on ivy leaves. In fact, it minds me o' a story in Dean Ramsay's book about a Scotchman when he was askit by an Englishman if he ca'd a sheep's head a dish? 'I dinna ken,' said Sawnie, 'but there's a lot o' gude confused eatin' about it, onyway.'

I told him that I felt it was more of a hash than a joint, a sort of literary haggis, but that it was difficult to give a fair notion of village life without bringing in all sorts of folks and scenes.

"That's exactly what I'm sayin'," said Andrew. "There's the ither kirks, as gude as the Free, that ye've said little about; an' then there's our tradesmen,—there were some queer fish among them in my young days; an' there's the schule, an' the doctor, an' plenty mair. Could ye no' hae said something about the like o' the generality o' the auld folk o' Blinkbonny? If ye tak' as lang to them as ye've ta'en to Bell, ye micht make fifty books."

I acknowledged the correctness of his remarks, and advised him to try it himself, and he would perhaps find it more difficult than he imagined.

"Me write a book!" said he; "I've mair sense. You'll find that you're sure to hae trampit on somebody's tender corns."

"Very likely," said I, "but if so, it has been quite unintentional on my part. I had no plan before me when I started, nor have I, whilst trying to reproduce bygone times, had any object in view but to present them in a friendly spirit and in a homely garb."

I hope that my readers will receive in the same spirit these "Bits from Blinkbonny."

THE END.

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